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**FAMILY, LEISURE, AND THE ARTS: ASPECTS OF THE
CULTURE OF THE ARISTOCRACY OF ULSTER, 1870-1925**

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**Ph.D.
University of Edinburgh
2011**

I declare that this dissertation is my own work, and has been composed solely by myself. No part of this work has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Devon McHugh

15 January 2012

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

The historiography of the north of Ireland in the 19th and 20th centuries fails to address many key issues regarding the social and material culture of the aristocracy of the region. Existing work has concentrated largely on economic and political questions. This thesis seeks to redress this balance by providing a study of the world of the Ulster aristocracy outside the realms of national politics and land purchase.

The work looks at six aspects of aristocratic culture between 1870 and 1925, using the personal and material records of twelve of the premier aristocratic families in the nine county region as a case study to examine changes in the family life, artistic and architectural patronage, and leisure practises of these families. The thesis does not seek to provide a comprehensive cultural history of the aristocracy; however, the discussions contained within this work are relevant to the wider aristocratic and elite culture of Ulster, Ireland, and Britain, and reflect the growing awareness of the landed classes of the rapid social changes of the time. While the study is in many ways central to examinations of contemporary aristocratic culture in Ireland and Britain, the specific intention of the work is to illuminate the (as yet) underexplored lives of these families. The families under examination demonstrate in their patterns of family life, artistic and architectural involvement, and leisure, both an adherence to a wider British-led 'cultural unionism', and a growing sense of their distinctive 'Ulster' identity. Additionally, the enormous wealth and exalted status of these families set them apart from their less privileged neighbours. The social, financial, and geographical place of these families within the United Kingdom influenced their culture in a distinctive way during this period.

By offering a new focus for the study of the history of the north of Ireland in the 19th and 20th centuries, this thesis seeks to open up an area of study that has been largely neglected by historians. The topics of discussion have been chosen to engage with some of the more marked weaknesses in the existing historiography, and also to reflect those areas in which archival and material sources are most abundant. The intention of the thesis is to examine the ways in which these families took an active part in adapting their culture during this period. By altering their patterns of consumption and movement to suit contemporary changes, and harnessing and manipulating ideas about the place of the elite within the wider British social climate, these families worked to retain their relevance into the 20th century. The goal of this thesis is to begin to construct what has been termed an 'occupied past'¹: the work seeks to provide, not a set of political and economic changes and an analysis of the responses to these challenges, but new research and discussion that more clearly reflects the day-to-day existences of these powerful and privileged families during a period of profound social, political, and economic change.

¹ Valerie Cumming, *Understanding Fashion History* (London, 2004), p.38

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**MAP OF THE NORTH OF IRELAND,
including the principal seats of the families under examination**



BARONSCOURT, Tyrone (Dukes of Abercorn)
CLANDEBOYE, Down (Marquesses of Dufferin and Ava)
MOUNTSTEWART, Down (Marquesses of Londonderry)
CALEDON, Tyrone (Earls of Caledon)
CASTLE COOLE, Fermanagh (Earls of Belmore)
CASTLE LESLIE, Monaghan (Leslie, Bt.)
CASTLEWELLAN, Down (Earls Annesley)
FLORENCE COURT, Fermanagh (Earls of Enniskillen)
ROSSMORE PARK, Monaghan (Lords Rossmore)
CROM CASTLE, Fermanagh (Earls Erne)
DAWSON'S GROVE, Monaghan (Earls of Dartrey)
MOURNE PARK, Down (Earls of Kilmorey)

Abbreviations

DCRO	Durham County Records Office
NLI	National Library of Ireland
NLS	National Library of Scotland
PRONI	Public Records Office of Northern Ireland
UAHS	Ulster Architectural Heritage Society

Note on Usage

The use of the term ‘Ulster’ within the title and body of this work denotes the nine-county province of Ulster as it existed as one of Ireland’s four provinces in 1870, when the research included within this thesis begins. It is important to recognise the sensitivity of a term that holds political connotations to this day. However, the word ‘Ulster’ and the geographic province which that term suggests, is, in the opinion of the author, the most appropriate for this area, which encompasses the nine-counties of Antrim, Armagh, Cavan Donegal, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry, Monaghan, and Tyrone. Ulster was the term that these families most often used for this area themselves, and while this study will regularly refer to this area as ‘the north of Ireland’, it is also not the intention of the author to shy away from the use of ‘Ulster’ to denote this area, as well.

Introduction

Within the history of the north of Ireland, there is an imbalance in the treatment of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. There exists a significant literature on the politics of the time, both Unionist and Nationalist, as well as local.¹ There is abundant source material on the economic climate of the period, and on the effects of land purchase on the economy in the area.² The historiography on land management, and on the organisation of the Irish estate is plentiful.³ Some historical analysis exists on elite families in the nine counties of Ulster as their lives intersected with contemporary society in the province, but this treatment is largely limited to the ways in which aristocratic and wealthy families interacted with the political climate in Ulster and in the rest of the United Kingdom.⁴ Markedly, there is no scholarly literature on the cultural world of the north of Ireland's elite families: no analysis of their marital networks or educational patterns; no examination of their leisure practices; no study of the ways their lives interacted with the high cultural influences of the day. The goal of this work is to change this, setting a precedent for further examination into the lives, not just the politics and pocketbooks, of Ulster's elite.

The existing historiography of the north of Ireland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries fails to address issues regarding the society and culture of the aristocracy of the province of Ulster. Historical secondary material has concentrated intensely and exclusively

¹ Paul Bew, Peter Gibbon, and Henry Patterson, *Northern Ireland 1921-2001: Political Forces and Social Classes* (London, 2002); Patrick Buckland, *Irish Unionism I: The Anglo-Irish and the New Ireland, 1885-1922* (Dublin, 1972); K. Theodore Hoppen, *Elections, Politics, and Society in Ireland 1832-1885* (Oxford, 1984); Alvin Jackson, *The Ulster Party: Irish Unionists in the House of Commons, 1884-1911* (Oxford, 1989) and *Home Rule: An Irish History, 1800-2000* (London, 2003); Diane Urquhart, *Women in Ulster Politics, 1890-1940: A History Not Yet Told* (Dublin, 2000)

² J.S. Donnelly, Jr., *The Land and People of Nineteenth Century Cork: The Rural Economy and the Land Question* (London, 1975); B.L. Solow, *The Land Question and the Irish Economy, 1870-1903* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971)

³ W.A. Maguire, *The Downshire Estates in Ireland, 1801-1845* (Downshire, 1972); Lindsay J. Proudfoot, *Urban Patronage and Social Authority: The Management of the Duke of Devonshire's Towns in Ireland, 1764-1891* (Washington, D.C., 1995); W.E. Vaughan, *Landlords and Tenants in Ireland, 1848-1904* (Dublin, 1984) and *Landlords and Tenants in Mid-Victorian Ireland* (Oxford, 1994)

⁴ Alvin Jackson, *Colonel Edward Saunderson: Land and Loyalty in Victorian Ireland* (Oxford, 1995); Diane Urquhart, *The Ladies of Londonderry: Women and Political Patronage* (London, 2007)

on economic and political questions, primarily those centring around Unionism, land tenure, estate management, the political formation of the Northern Irish State, and the relationship between landowners in the north of Ireland and the Parliament at Westminster. Questions about the nature of elite society in the province have been neglected, providing no research or analysis on the nineteenth and twentieth century marital or childrearing patterns of the aristocracy, and very little on their leisure pursuits either on their estates or in the capitals at Dublin and London. There has been minimal analysis of how social patterns altered political ones, or of how questions related to family, Society, or leisure served to influence the decisions or shape the daily lives of Ulster's aristocratic families. Examining the economics of land ownership, sales, and investments outside the context of what the income generated from these sales was used for, or how the land was intended to be enjoyed, has produced a history of the aristocracy in the north of Ireland in a vacuum. Additionally, the contributions of this elite to the worlds of artistic, literary, horticultural, and architectural patronage and creation, and the role these peers continued to play in British and Irish high culture into the twentieth century, have been ignored, presenting a picture of an elite bound by the limitations of political Unionism and economic decline.

This thesis seeks to redress this imbalance by providing a case-study of the world of the aristocracy of the north of Ireland outside the realms of national politics and land purchase. The goal of this thesis is to begin to construct what Valerie Cumming has termed an 'occupied past'⁵: not a set of political and economic challenges and an analysis of the responses to these changes, but a study which more clearly reflects the day-to-day existences of these powerful and privileged families during a period of recognised social, political, and economic change. The work looks at six aspects of aristocratic culture between 1870 and 1925, using twelve of the premier aristocratic families in the nine county province of Ulster as a case study.

By offering a new focus for the study of the history of the north of Ireland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this thesis is intended to open up an area of study that has been largely neglected by historians. The research contained herein offers a more nuanced and in-depth picture of the *milieu* in which political and economic decisions were made by members of the elite. This both illuminates the practises of the landed classes in the north of

⁵ Valerie Cumming, *Understanding Fashion History* (London, 2004), p.38

Ireland, and offers future opportunities for comparison with their peers elsewhere in Britain, Ireland, and Europe. One of the intentions of this work is to highlight a new method of using source material, integrating traditional written sources, such as letters, with other materials, such as architecture, art, fashion, and landscaping. It is also the intention of this study to draw attention to how documents previously used—or even expressly collected—for their political or economic value can be used to research and write social and cultural histories. The development of a cultural context for aristocratic life in Ulster will contribute to the preservation and dissemination of knowledge about the built heritage and material culture of these families, offering a new intellectual environment in which materials held by The National Trust, National Museums Northern Ireland, and other public and private bodies can be analysed, displayed, presented, and understood both by academic researchers and by the public.

The sample of families in this study has been chosen using financial and land-based criteria as established by John Bateman in *The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland* (1878), and has been specifically selected to reflect the spectrum of the highest level of aristocratic income and status in the north of Ireland. In his survey, Bateman listed both the incomes and the acreage of each landowner: the twelve families selected for this survey all claimed at least £10,000 annual income, as well as owning at least 10,000 acres in the province of Ulster. According to William Bence-Jones, a landowner from West Cork writing in the early 1880s, ‘a man who... wanted all the conveniences and comforts that London and the country could give, could have got them for £10,000 a year.’⁶ The ability to command all the comforts of aristocratic life was an aspect of the culture of these families, and one that sets them apart from other groups of landowners, who experienced greater variations in wealth and in lifestyle.

⁶ William Bence Jones, ‘Landowning as a Business’, *19th Century*, xi (1882), p.254. Deborah Wilson similarly used £10,000 as the minimum annual income for her study of aristocratic women in Ireland, offering an idea of the nineteenth century purchasing power of this sum at the turn of the twenty-first century as equivalent to approximately £720,000. While this number does give some idea of the value of these incomes, twentieth century changes in the cost of living render these figures meaningful in only a very limited fashion. As Ross McKibbin has explained, the result of early twentieth century income tax changes in Britain and both national and international inflation was that between 1914 and 1925, the real purchasing power of a £10,000 income declined sharply. The combined effects of these changes meant that in order to wield the same purchasing power, between 1914 and 1925, the recipient of the nominal £10,000 income would have needed to increase his earnings to £30,000 a year. Deborah Wilson, *Women, Marriage and Property in Wealthy Landed Families in Ireland, 1750-1850* (Manchester, 2009), p.1; Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England, 1918-1951* (Oxford, 1998), p.38

This study examines twelve aristocratic families, a limited number which allows the research undertaken to encompass a wide range of sources, and an accordingly wide spectrum of aspects of the culture of this group. The families under examination include: the Dukes of Abercorn; the Earls of Annesley; the Earls of Belmore; the Earls of Caledon; the Earls of Dartrey; the Marquesses of Dufferin and Ava; the Earls of Enniskillen; the Earls of Erne; the Earls of Kilmorey; the Leslie (Baronets); the Marquesses of Londonderry; and the Barons Rossmore. All of these families qualify in terms of income and land ownership in Bateman's study, forming a coterie of wealthy and well-connected aristocrats, based primarily in the north of Ireland, but sharing a cultural world and social principles with other elite families from across Ireland and Britain. Dates, including those selected here to provide the chronological parameters of this study, are inherently arbitrary, and in choosing round numbers to bracket this study, it is intended to point up this very subjective aspect of the study's boundaries. Neither political events, nor international crises, nor the changing decades, actually forced immediate changes in the familial and social cultures of the aristocracy during this time any more than they have in any culture, at any time. The years between 1870 and 1925 can, however, be looked at as a period of swift change within Britain and Ireland: both for the nation at large, and for the aristocratic families included in this case study specifically. Because of the rapidity of this wave of change—political, economic, and social—this period is important for examining the initial cultural reaction of the elite, and ascertaining how lasting were the effects of their efforts at adaptation. Therefore, the period 1870 to 1925 has been selected as one that indicates a certain type of continuity as an era of elite adaptation in Ulster: but these dates are not perfect bookends, and cannot be viewed as the definitive start and end of this culture.

Table 1.1: Acreage and property value of twelve Ulster peers, 1878, arranged by annual income

Name	Family Home	Acres Owned	Property Value (£)
Marquess of Londonderry	Mountstewart	50,323	100,118
Duke of Abercorn	Baronscourt	65,727	45,624
Earl of Kilmorey	Mourne Park	52,412	34,022
Earl Annesley	Castlewellan	51,060	29,539
Earl of Erne	Crom Castle	40,365	23,804
Earl of Caledon	Caledon	34,060	22,321
Sir John Leslie, 1 st Bt.	Castle Leslie	49,968	21,051
Marquess of Dufferin	Clandeboyne	18,238	21,043
Earl of Dartrey	Dawson's Grove	28,578	19,819
Earl of Enniskillen	Florence Court	30,204	19,290
Lord Rossmore	Rossmore Park	14,839	13,427
Earl of Belmore	Castle Coole	19,349	10,970

Source: John Bateman, *The Great Landowners of Britain* (London, 1878)

In his examination of literature in Ireland in the nineteenth century, Thomas Flanagan defined Ireland's culture as holding its "roots and being in language, habits, traditions, the words of poets, the aspects of landscape."⁷ This definition of Ireland's culture offers a very romantic, but not necessarily applicable, picture of the cultural landscape of nineteenth-century Ireland; one that infers that the only true culture within the island was a sort of pre-civilised, timeless society that has much to do with late-nineteenth century allusions to a Gaelic past, and little to do with the changing nature of Ireland's nineteenth- and twentieth-century realities. Ross McKibbin, in contrast, has defined culture broadly as the world of ideas and ideals, as well as work, income, family relations, housing, and community, drawing a line, however, between these patterns and two alternative forms of culture: political culture, and what he refers to as 'high' culture, including the realms of art and architectural patronage which form a key component of this study.⁸ For the purposes of this study, 'culture' will be defined in a way that has much more in common with the ideas of the early proponents of

⁷ Thomas Flanagan, 'Literature in English, 1801-1891', in W.E. Vaughan (ed.), *A New History of Ireland V: Ireland, 1801-1870* (Oxford, 1996), p.483

⁸ McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, p.v

1960s ‘cultural studies’, such as Raymond Williams, who has associated ‘culture’ as an idea with consumption goods and leisure activities.⁹

This is not a study of this culture in its entirety, however, and the goal of this research is to present six aspects of the culture of this group of families, with the intention of encouraging further examination of this subject in the future. Like McKibbin’s research, this work is not concerned with the manifestations of political culture. The topics given in depth analysis within this work include marriage networks, childrearing, leisure activities on the estate and within the imperial capital, the creation and renovation of the built environment, and interaction with the world of arts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While important, these topics do not represent the totality of elite culture in the north of Ireland at this time. The analysis within this work will deal with subjects that are largely indicative of the nature of Ulster’s elite culture between 1870 and 1925, but it is crucial to remember that this is an examination of these aspects of this culture, and is neither an exhaustive study of culture in general, or a comprehensive survey of all of the cultural manifestations of these families.

Within these large and complex aristocratic families and social networks the distinction between ‘gentry’ and ‘aristocracy’ is not always as clear as it might seem. Untitled younger sons of peers and their sisters who did not marry back into the peerage form a group who technically existed in one realm, but socially in another, while the generations born from these children of peers were again farther removed from the titles, but may have still been raised within the same environment as their titled cousins. Queen Victoria selected her ladies in waiting only from within the peerage, but used a more stringent definition of ‘aristocrat’ for Ladies of the Bedchamber than for Maids of Honour. The former, the highest honour on offer to an aristocratic woman within the royal household, was a position conferred solely on the wives of peers. The latter position could be held by a woman who was within two degrees of the peerage: her grandfather, or a nearer male relation, had to be a peer. According to Kim Reynolds, this distinction ‘clearly defines how far aristocracy was transmitted between generations, marking a cut off between the aristocracy and the merely well-born.’¹⁰

⁹ See, for example, Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (London, 1958)

¹⁰ Kim Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain* (Oxford 1998), p.22

For the purposes of this study, slightly different criteria of inclusion are defined. Members of the twelve families under examination who were peers, spouses of peers, children of peers, or siblings of peers are included. This specifically limits those in the study to figures who were raised within the highest levels of elite society, and who grew up with an expectation of being able to continue being a part of that society, and limits the inclusion of those who inherited unexpectedly through cadet branches. This method of demarcation is necessary because of the cultural focus of the study: while an analysis of the cultural decisions of those who were integrated into the aristocracy of Britain and Ireland through marriage and inheritance from significantly different social, economic, or geographical spheres would be revealing, it would require a different set of questions and methods of examination from this study. So, while those women who married into the aristocracy in the north of Ireland from outside the landed elite (American brides, for example) are discussed within the thesis, they are not the primary subjects of the study, just as those who inherited titles from beyond the immediate families of these peers also do not form a subject for this study.

BOUNDARIES OF STUDY

The discussions contained within this thesis are, in many ways, relevant to the wider aristocratic and elite culture in the north of Ireland, and to contemporary aristocratic culture in Ireland and Britain. However, the intention of the work is to specifically illuminate the lives of these families, not to create a wide survey of the various guises of high aristocratic culture during this period. While aspects of the analysis may be representative of the aristocracy of Britain and Ireland in general, or of elite cultural life in the province of Ulster specifically, the analysis within this study is essentially about these families. This is not a comprehensive survey of culture in the north of Ireland, or of aristocratic culture in Ireland: it is a unique, and very specific, case study of a particular elite group.

The landed classes—wealthy, privileged, elite—were economically separate from the rest of British and Irish society in the late nineteenth century, but even within this group, there were additional distinctions. Those families under examination here were a part of an elite group within the aristocracy, and because of the specific privileges of wealth and status

that they enjoyed, their culture must be examined separately from that of the wider landed classes. Additionally, historians of culture like McKibbin have seen the upper classes as defined, at least in part, by public display,¹¹ making those aspects of elite culture in the north of Ireland in which display was central intrinsic to their existences as leaders of the nation in political, economic, social, or cultural terms. For the wealthiest families of the aristocracy, this was increasingly important as the nineteenth century became the twentieth. Previous studies of the elite in this period, as well as concentrating more closely on the economic and social, rather than the cultural, aspects of life, have looked at these families in conjunction with their neighbours, forming a picture of the decline of 'Big House' society in Ireland more generally.¹² This has given a wider picture of the changes in landed society between the 1860s and the 1940s. The gentry in the north of Ireland, however, do not form a component of this study. This is primarily because as a class, the super-wealthy aristocracy were culturally distinct, even from their near-neighbours and friends within the nine-county province. It is impossible to properly examine the culture of these aristocratic families within this context: though the social gulf between a peer of the realm and a country squire was significant, it was not insurmountable; on the other hand, the power for patronage and acquisition held by these very wealthy families is not comparable to their less privileged neighbours. The study of the cultural world of the gentry cannot be included within the parameters of this examination without diluting the analysis of aristocratic culture itself.

Shared among these families was a vast network of cultural and social attributes which influenced both everyday life and the larger currents of national and international politics and society. While there are some variations within this group, these families existed within a very specific stratum of income, landownership, and status, supported by an intricate elite marriage network, shared patterns of education, and a widespread political sympathy. This study will demonstrate that these aristocratic families additionally shared a larger cultural taste, a 'cultural unionism', which both influenced and was influenced by their decisions in the fields of art, architecture, interior and exterior furnishings, fashion, and leisure. To a large extent, this was a taste that was shared across elite Britain during this time, but which was also partly specific to their own regional alliances. This 'taste' was, in fact, an inherent and

¹¹ McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, p.2

¹² Terence Dooley, *The Decline of the Big House in Ireland* (Dublin, 2001); Olwen Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland* (Dublin, 2009); David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (London, 1992); Peter Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* (New Haven, 1997)

intrinsic part of their culture, and was established not only by the possession of a title or a fortune.

The ‘class’ (in socio-economic terms) of the elite members of British and Irish society at this time was also forged through a tradition and awareness of lineage, and through a shared concept or understanding of communal values, interests, and background. This concept of class was largely created through extensive land-ownership, through the residence on that land, and through the joint pleasures and responsibilities that came from that possession of acreage: families like the Leslies, who were ennobled within the scope of this study, had a tradition of landownership in County Monaghan dating back to the seventeenth century, while families like the Mulhollands, created Barons Dunleath in 1892, did not have this tradition, and thereby did not have the same shared culture.

According to Thomas Jones Hughes, of the thirty-three most valuable estates in Ireland (those valued at more than £20,000 in 1876), twelve of these estates were located in the province of Ulster.¹³ This renders the group of families under examination in this study a more significant minority within the north of Ireland than if they had held their estates elsewhere, allowing the establishment of a separate, super-wealthy, aristocratic culture in the region. Beyond this factor, the geographical limitation of this study within the nine county province is simply a means of narrowing down the case study. As David Hempton and Myrtle Hill have recognised in their study of Evangelical Protestantism in Ulster, in any regional study, there is a risk of seeing that analysis as a ‘peculiar study of a peculiar people in a peculiar place.’¹⁴ During this period, there were factors that made the culture of these peers somewhat different from that found elsewhere in Ireland or in Britain, and these factors were increasingly manifested in their artistic commissions and day-to-day culture. Yet on the whole, aristocrats of this elite class were more a part of a larger British and Irish landowning culture than they were part of a specifically regional cultural idiom, and it is the recognition of this fact that is central to understanding the culture of these families specifically, as well as

¹³ T. Jones Hughes, ‘The estate system of land-holding in 19th century Ireland’, in William Nolan, *The Shaping of Ireland* (Dublin, 1986), p.40; T. Jones Hughes, ‘Landholding and settlement in the counties of Meath and Cavan in the nineteenth century,’ in Patrick O’Flanagan, Paul Ferguson, and Kevin Whelan (eds.), *Rural Ireland, 1600-1900: Modernisation and Change* (Cork, 1987), p.105; T. Jones Hughes, ‘Historical Geography of Ireland from 1700’, in G.L.H. Davies (ed.), *Irish Geography* (Dublin 1984), p.157

¹⁴ David Hempton and Myrtle Hill, *Evangelical Protestantism in Ulster Society, 1740-1890* (London, 1992), p.xi

the class at large. The cultural world of the aristocracy elsewhere in Ireland has therefore been analysed sparingly within this work. The thesis is a case study, not a sustained comparison, and while some comparative material has brought to light information about the aristocracy of Ulster, this is not the concentration of this study.

Important for this study is the concentration of these families within a physically close geographical area and within a tightly knit social and marital circle: these families knew each other, visited each other, and corresponded with each other, forming a network of actively shared cultural values. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, ‘Ulster’ as a term and region was as evocative as it is today,¹⁵ as is illustrated in the cultural outpourings of the aristocratic families in this study: the use of the term in Ernest Hamilton’s 1917 and 1919 books *The Soul of Ulster* and *Elizabethan Ulster* depended on a certain conception of the area as much as did the Marchioness of Londonderry’s use of the symbol of the Red Hand of Ulster in the gardens at Mountstewart.¹⁶ A divergence in the local culture of the area has been speculated on by some historians, and scholars such as Jackson and T. Jones Hughes have suggested differences in geography, land use, society, and history, within the province.¹⁷ Because of this, the culture of Ulster—including elite culture—may benefit from being examined separately from that of the rest of Ireland, in order to assess whether this difference was, in fact, conscious, and to look at the ways in which these differences may have been manifested in the leisure, family life, or aesthetic choices of these families.

The use of the province of Ulster as the geographical boundary for this study, rather than Northern Ireland, is also an effort to avoid the anachronistic use of terminology: it is misleading to use political boundaries that did not yet exist in a study of this nature. The majority of this thesis pre-dates Partition; accordingly, the geographical boundaries of the study must be determined using criteria that existed at that time. Within this case study two particular enclaves of aristocratic homes exist: in County Down, along the eastern coast and on the Ards peninsula, and in the south of the province, along the borders of Counties Cavan, Monaghan, and Fermanagh, an area recognised by T. Jones Hughes as part of a web of important landownership stretching through east from Lough Erne and the Cavan-Fermanagh

¹⁵ Please see Note on Usage, p.iv

¹⁶ Ernest Hamilton, *The Soul of Ulster* (London, 1917); Ernest Hamilton, *Elizabethan Ulster* (London, 1919); Marchioness of Londonderry, *Mount Stewart* (Belfast, 1956)

¹⁷ Hughes, ‘Landholding and settlement’, pp.104, 109, 116, 122-4; Jackson, *Colonel Edward Saunderson*, pp.187-8

border.¹⁸ The creation of the border of Northern Ireland drew a line between the homes of formerly intimate aristocratic families. By dividing the area into a six-county, rather than a nine-county, region, the aristocratic communities that did exist during this time were split. To echo this within this study would not only give a sense of inevitability to the political decisions that were taken in the twentieth century, but it would also derail the existing sense of community that these peers were dedicated to preserving. In examining the culture of an aristocratic community, this study seeks to examine the collective culture that existed before the implementation of this boundary.

Within this study, the concentration of architectural and decorative analysis is heavily weighted toward primary residences, located as they were in the north of Ireland. While some discussion of the decorative features and domestic arrangement of the London homes of these families is also included, this material is supplementary, and used to inform analysis of other metropolitan movements, rather than for domestic analysis in its own right. These primary residences form the centre of this analysis because they are culturally symbolic, representative of the importance of dynasty and the aristocratic cultural community, and they were recognised as such at the time. They commanded the weight of the attention and financial investment of the aristocrat. The Irish residences of these peers had a permanency within each family that did not exist for most other homes: with some exceptions, London residences were fairly fluid, often held by dowagers or secondary branches of the family, or even leased specifically for the season, while residences in other parts of the United Kingdom fell in and out of favour as based on fashion and personal tastes. Residences held by these families in the north of Ireland, on the other hand, were perpetually a central location of life for these peers, and therefore commanded the attention of their owners and their families.

This thesis is limited by time, and by length: it cannot do everything, and it cannot be a masterwork of politico-socio-economic-cultural history. It is a case study of six aspects of the culture of the aristocracy of Ulster, concentrating on twelve families; it is not a re-examination or restatement of the political and economic histories that have been produced in the last hundred years. Additionally, the topics under examination within this work have been shaped by my own academic background in the history of art, and my previous research on the culture of the gentry families in County Cavan. A number of topics which have already

¹⁸ Hughes, 'Landholding and settlement', p.105

been explored by historians are therefore not within the scope of the analysis, including: land purchase; estate management and changes in ownership; the economics of estate and domestic management; the Land War and rural dissent; the politics and details of Unionism; or the involvement of the aristocracy in local and national government. Many of these important political and economic issues have already been subject to extensive historical exploration and debate. The study additionally does not examine the revolutionary period, the subject of the Great War, the Anglo-Irish War, or the formation of the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland. These subjects have also been addressed by scholars elsewhere, and a discussion of their complexities would detract from the focus of this study.

Additionally, some topics which are relevant to the study of the landed classes in the north of Ireland, and which have not been widely explored in the past, are also not within the scope of this study, including some larger questions about the world of the elite landowner that could be considered 'cultural'. Notably, religion does not form a core component of the analysis. The enormous role that religion played within aristocratic society in Ulster should not be underestimated, but it also cannot be comprehensively or satisfactorily treated within a study dedicated to other issues. As Linda Colley has recognised in her study of the elite in Britain, Protestantism formed the framework for national and individual cultures; for these families, their adherence to the Church of Ireland acted in this way, and religion was the foundation on which the society of aristocratic Ulster was built.¹⁹ The centrality of this force within the lives of the elite seems to have also affected how consciously discussions about faith were embraced by aristocratic families in the north of Ireland by the end of the nineteenth century. The documentation of these families reveals surprisingly few direct references to religion; instead, church attendance, the principles of Anglican Protestantism, and the teachings of evangelical Christianity seem to have held a passive, possibly largely unexamined, place within the lives of these families. In this way, Protestantism may have held an inherent place within the lives of these families, but one that was manifested in an implicit, rather than an explicit, way within their records from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There is little doubt that, as Myrtle Hill and David Hempton have recognised, the values of the Protestant faith were central to the creation and sustainment of a

¹⁹ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven and London, 1992), pp.8,18

Protestant identity in the north of Ireland.²⁰ This centrality of religion in the world of these families may explain the dearth of attention paid to it in the records: there was no debate regarding the faith of the majority of these families. Peers in the north of Ireland did not alter their Protestantism in either faith or form at this time: to change their faith in either form or function would have been to shatter and sacrifice the foundations of their culture. The changes they made and experienced in their collective and individual cultures (and therefore those aspects of their lives which frequently made their way into records and family letters) were to other aspects of their culture: their marriage networks, their methods of raising families and educating children, their leisure practices on their estates and in the cities, their architectural patronage, and their involvement with the world of the arts all experienced some change at this time. It was these areas which they were adapting to retain cultural relevance, and these are, therefore, the areas to which they dedicated the most time and thought, thereby making up the bulk of their output at the time. This attention has directed the focus of this work.

Similarly, wider questions of identity are not explored in depth here: national, personal, dynastic, and gendered identities (to name but a few) were important components in forming the aristocratic character, but like religious questions, are too complex to be shoe-horned into other discussions. These topics, and the role they played in elite culture in the north of Ireland, will hopefully form the basis for future studies on Ulster's aristocracy, stimulated by the new focus of this work on the history of the province beyond the political and economic forces at work before Partition. In addition, some topics of exploration have a central place in the world of the aristocracy in the north of Ireland, but demand an alternate analytical focus. These topics also have not been given space within this study. Importantly, the world of the servant and of the tenant on the aristocratic estate in the late nineteenth century is an under-explored subject, as are the related areas of the modernisation, design, and construction of tenant housing and tenant- or labour-focused estate outbuildings by elite landowners. Servants also held a crucial role within the elite home, an area deserving of greater study, especially in the context of domestic technology, child-rearing, and effect of religious difference on elite family dynamics. Again, these topics deserve specialist treatment within their own studies.

²⁰ Hempton and Hill, *Evangelical Protestantism*, p.180

Material culture is also a topic that does not receive full treatment within this thesis. In general, the availability of source material has guided the inclusion of a topic within the six aspects of aristocratic culture that form the analysis of this work, and the availability of a great deal of significant material on the family life, artistic patronage, and leisure practises of these families has encouraged their inclusion in this study. However, the world of possibility also restricts what can be included in any thesis: by the late nineteenth century, the manufacturing boom had increased the sheer volume of aristocratic consumption and ownership exponentially. Because of this, there exists a wealth of objects that would contribute to the study of the material culture of these families, both in museums and in private collections. Yet whereas detailed analysis of the material culture of Ireland in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has been completed by scholars like Toby Barnard, for this period, to complete that sort of analysis for twelve families, without the context of a body of existing secondary literature on the cultural world of those families, would be nearly impossible. Instead, this thesis strives to illuminate the cultures behind these possessions, revealing the larger currents of daily life that shaped the use of material culture, and concentrating on the use of architectural and painted sources, in order to create a framework on which future studies of the material culture of Ulster can be built.

SOURCES AND THE TREATMENT OF THE CULTURE OF THE ARISTOCRACY IN THE NORTH OF IRELAND

The records used most within this thesis are letters, both those written and received by the families of the aristocracy within this case study. Additionally, journals and daily planners have offered insight into the day-to-day existence of the elite at this time, offering an unrivalled picture of aristocratic life. However, letters collected with preservation in mind do not provide an unbiased picture of aristocratic life, and those members of the aristocracy who preserved their records were sometimes conscious of the image they would be presenting to future generations. Material has been removed, destroyed, or edited, whether accidentally, incidentally, or to eliminate sensitive material. However, by recognising the existence of this bias in the records and the system of conventions inherent within any

correspondence,²¹ this can, to some extent, be overcome. Additionally, the survival of these altered records tells us something else about the ability of the aristocracy to recognise and consciously structure their place in history. Other records, including bills, household accounts, legal records, game books, and livestock ledgers have given more incidental information on the cultural world of the aristocracy in the north of Ireland between 1870 and 1925.

The research in this study is primarily drawn from family records held in the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland, supplemented with material held in other collections, including the National Library of Ireland, the National Library of Scotland, the County Records Office, Durham, Churchill College, Cambridge, and Glasgow University. All twelve families have substantial deposits at PRONI, containing significant material from the period of this study. Some of the records from PRONI have been examined as historical sources before, and have provided information for past political, economic, and social histories. They have not, however, been looked at collectively, as has been done within this thesis. While previous scholars have primarily used these records for their political and estate information, they have largely neglected the important role they play in illuminating the social and cultural world of the Ulster aristocracy during this time.

Built and constructed sources have provided an important area of exploration, and have formed a central component of this research, enhancing the written and published source materials for this study. The principal country homes of these families have played an important role in this. Of the twelve main residences associated with the families in this sample, only two of the houses have been demolished, which leaves a substantial architectural record for examination. The remaining homes are in various states of repair and use: many are open, at least partially, to the public; others have been converted for use as hotels, schools, convents, and conference centres. While a few houses still retain some original furnishings and décor, others have been altered extensively, and can only provide the most basic shell for reconstructive architectural research. Surveys, such as Mark Bence-Jones's *A Guide to Irish Country Houses*,²² have provided a foundation for reconstructing those houses which are not accessible or which have been partly or completely destroyed.

²¹ Sarah Pearsall, *Atlantic Families* (Oxford, 2008), pp.15,24,36,128

²² Mark Bence-Jones, *A Guide to Irish Country Houses* (London, 1978)

Another significant source for this study has been the artistic and material collections of these families. Where the collections survive somewhat intact, they have been examined, but collections are inherently formed of personal taste and are changeable. Therefore, catalogues (where they exist) of books, artworks, and furnishings have been used to form a picture of the collections in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Architectural and decorative plans have been instrumental in reconstructing the aesthetic intentions of the time, especially where limitations of time, space, or finance kept these plans from coming to fruition. For the analysis of the commissions, purchase, and sale of artworks, Gerald Reitlinger's *The Economics of Taste* has proved invaluable.²³ The material record of these families is also a source that is not without limitations, although the reconstruction of the furnishings, fashions, and mores of these families is assisted both by their own preservation of their material culture (both within the home in terms of furnishings, and through the developing medium of photography), and in the interest expressed by the public and media in their sartorial and aesthetic choices. Among the families here examined were two amateur photography enthusiasts (Hugh, 5th Earl Annesley, and Francis Needham, 4th Earl of Kilmorey), who captured formal and informal family and estate life on film, while the interest of the press in the weddings, clothes, and home lives of the elite was published in daily newspapers, as well as in journals and magazines such as *The Queen* and *Country Life*.

As well as using standard modern reference works (*Who's Who?*, *Dictionary of National Biography*), the research here has utilised a number of reference works published within the years of this study, and these have provided information, as well as setting parameters, for the study. As has been discussed, John Bateman's work on the landowners of Britain and Ireland has provided the economic information necessary to select the families within this case study. Other works of a similar type have also contributed contemporary factual information, including Hussey de Burgh's *The Landowners of Ireland*,²⁴ which supplements the economic information that formed the basis of Bateman's work with a greater scope of personal information. Additionally, this information has come from gazettes of ancestry such as *Burke's* and *Debrett's*.

²³ Gerald Reitlinger, *The Economics of Taste: The Rise and Fall of Picture Prices, 1760-1960* (London, 1961)

²⁴ Hussey de Burgh, *The Landowners of Ireland: An Alphabetical List of the Owners of Estates of 500 Acres of £500 Valuation and Upwards in Ireland* (Dublin, 1878)

The material has been treated thematically, rather than chronologically or dynastically, which has the benefit of demonstrating the continuity of interest across generations and among families, and drawing attention to the essential similarities of aristocratic concerns. In the areas under primary examination here, both continuity and change are apparent throughout the fifty-five years of this study. The areas examined illustrate some of the cultural concerns of aristocratic life, and were tools used to enhance the family prestige that was a key element of aristocratic power in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The study will begin with a contextual exploration of the families under examination in this thesis, giving a general introduction to their lives and estates in the 1870s. This is a cultural study in which social issues are crucially important, while politics and economics primarily provide context, and are not a focus of analysis.

As the primary purpose of this study is to initiate the examination of the culture of the aristocracy of the north of Ireland in a way that it has not been previously analysed, there are no secondary works on the specific subject of elite culture in Ulster for this period. Thomas Flanagan wrote that ‘the strands of art and politics have been intricately intertwined in the cultural history of modern Ireland.’²⁵ And yet, only literature is given any treatment in the *New History*’s 1801-1870 volume, and in that, there is only a single chapter over-viewing the literary highlights of nearly a century. This is clearly an oversight, and one which is reflective of the study of Ireland’s history in the nineteenth century more generally; while the *New History of Ireland* is not a cultural history, but rather a political and economic history that integrates some social elements, there is no significant treatment within this type of work of the cultural, literary, or aesthetic history of any part of Ireland, regardless of social class, religious denomination, or locality.

The secondary literature on the aristocracy in the north of Ireland during this period has concentrated almost entirely on the participation of the elite in politics, thereby leaving the social and material implications of their lives untended. Those subjects which form the peripheral political and economic context of this study—the land question, estate management, and the politics of Ulster and Ulster Unionism—have received a great deal of attention in the last fifty years. The question of the economics of land management has been most notably treated in the work of B.L. Solow, who with other revisionist historians of the

²⁵ Flanagan, ‘Literature in English’, p.482

1970s and 1980s like W.E. Vaughan, have re-examined earlier colonial ideas about settlement and landholding in Ireland and the role of the socio-economic context of the late nineteenth century as a contributor to the unpopularity of the landowning classes.²⁶ Certainly, the financial constraints under which landed families in the north of Ireland operated during this time were growing, and the decline of rental incomes of these families had an enormous impact on their ability to engage with the combined British and Irish cultural world of which they had long been a part. Later work by Theodore Hoppen on the reassertion of landlord rights in the period that followed the Famine has challenged both earlier pictures of landed rapaciousness and of elite socio-economic victimhood. Hoppen instead sees this period as one in which the families from Ireland's Big Houses were able to consolidate both their landed (economic) and their political powers through the late-century recovery of agriculture and the wider revival of national and local political involvement of the landed classes.²⁷ This view has partly inspired the alternative idea presented of the cultural record of these families during the period from 1870 to 1925 in this thesis, in which the adaptability of and active changes made by these families during a transitional period are highlighted, refuting older ideas of cultural decline in the post-Ascendancy period.

In *Urban Patronage and Social Authority* Lindsay Proudfoot presented one of the arguments from which this thesis was born. Produced contemporarily with an upsurge of academic interest in the politics and social authority of the landed classes in the north of Ireland since the 1980s, Proudfoot's suggestion that the passage of the Land Acts from the 1870s onward marked the end of the dominance of the propertied elite's landed base, and therefore their economic powers, contrasts with the study of the continued role of the landed elite in Ulster Unionism, and with the growing power of women, especially aristocratic women, in politics in the north of Ireland.²⁸ Instead, this thesis argues that while economic change did alter the patterns of elite life, the end of the propertied monopoly of landowners in the north of Ireland did not spell the end of their cultural influence, and that despite the changing sources of elite wealth (which was transferred in many families to investments and

²⁶ Solow, *The Land Question*; Vaughan, *Landlords and Tenants*

²⁷ Hoppen, *Elections, Politics, and Society*; K. Theodore Hoppen, *Ireland since 1800: Conflict and Conformity* (London, 1989)

²⁸ Jackson, *The Ulster Party*; Jackson, *Colonel Edward Saunderson*; Proudfoot, *Urban Patronage and Social Authority*; Janice Holmes and Diane Urquhart (eds.), *Coming into the light: the work, politics and religion of women in Ulster, 1840-1940* (Belfast, 1994); Urquhart, *Women in Ulster Politics*; Urquhart, *The Ladies of Londonderry*

industry), these families continued to live predominantly landed lives, and to promote their social role through the use of ideas about their traditional role as leaders within the countryside and within the realms of aesthetics and social patronage.

Alongside the increased interest in the politics, landownership, and economic situation of the north of Ireland in the last thirty years, the historiography of the nineteenth and twentieth century fate of the landed classes in Ireland has developed in the past decade, beginning to keep pace with earlier studies of the aristocracy in the rest of the United Kingdom. Most recently, Olwen Purdue's *The Big House in the North of Ireland: Land, Power, and Social Elites, 1878-1960* has shed light on the social and economic fates of families from the six north-eastern counties, and especially on their homes and estates, offering a more nuanced picture of 'decline' than previous studies,²⁹ in line with the findings of this work. Purdue's research acts as a counterpoint to Terence Dooley's earlier studies of landed decline in the south of Ireland, and shares the same social and economic preoccupations,³⁰ as well as a similar base for sources and subjects. However, while these studies begin to study the way these families lived during this period (and for both studies, encompassing both the transitional period under examination here, as well as the later challenges of the mid-twentieth century), the picture they present is one that is heavily weighted toward the existing literature on transfer of land and the social implications of this change.

This growth of interest in the social world of the landed classes in Ireland is reflective of a wider interest in the study of the aristocracy and gentry in the United Kingdom and Europe, originally born from F.M.L. Thompson's seminal *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century*.³¹ The specific cultural elements that form this thesis, including marriage networks and the education of children, patronage of architecture and the arts, and the leisure patterns of the elite comprised part of Thompson's research, as well as those studies which followed it which have most closely influenced this work, including in David Cannadine's *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, Peter Mandler's *The Fall and Rise of the*

²⁹ Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*

³⁰ Dooley, *The Decline of Unionist Politics*; Dooley, *The Plight of the Monaghan Protestants*; Terence Dooley, *Sources for the History of Landed Estates in Ireland* (Dublin, 2000); Dooley, *The Decline of the Big House*

³¹ F.M.L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1961)

Stately Home, and Dominic Lieven's *The Aristocracy in Europe*.³² This secondary material has been heavily weighted toward the British or European perspective, and where Ireland is included at all within a work (as is tangentially the case in Cannadine's work) space is not given to allow for the regional distinctions, or for the subtleties of experience between status levels that make up a core aspect of this study.

What the secondary studies of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have failed to do for Ireland is to build a body of work that presents social life in Ireland during the late nineteenth century in the same comprehensive way that eighteenth century life has been revealed over the last thirty years. The emphasis of this study on the culture of the aristocracy of the north of Ireland complements the work of such scholars as Toby Barnard by allowing the scope of cultural studies in Ireland to incorporate the late, as well as early, modern period.³³ The early modern period and eighteenth century are well-represented in the literature of cultural historiography. The work of Barnard and of Maxine Berg on luxury, material culture, and consumption has given a comprehensive view of the physical world of the eighteenth century in both Ireland and in Britain.³⁴ The work of Anthony Malcomson on the social and family lives, archival records, and especially the marriage networks and the implications of elite Irish marriage networks of the eighteenth century, have helped to form a picture of life in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that does not yet exist for the families under examination in this study.³⁵ The work of historians like James Kelly has further brought important aspects of Irish life in the eighteenth century to the fore, and his work on the culture of masculinities and duelling, as well as on gallows speeches and the history of medicine, demonstrates the breadth of cultural secondary sources which are in

³² Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*; David Cannadine, *Aspects of Aristocracy: Grandeur and Decline in Modern Britain* (New Haven, 1994); Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* (London, 1997); see also, Peter Mandler, *English National Character*; Dominic Lieven, *The Aristocracy in Europe, 1815-1914* (Basingstoke, 1992)

³³ T.C. Barnard, *A guide to sources for the history of material culture in Ireland, 1500-2000* (Dublin, 2005); Barnard, *Improving Ireland? Projectors, Prophets and Profiteers, 1641-1786* (Dublin, 2008); Barnard, *Irish Protestant Ascents and Descents, 1641-1770* (Dublin, 2004); Barnard, *Making the Grand Figure: Lives and Possessions in Ireland, 1641-1770* (New Haven, 2004); Barnard, *A New Anatomy of Ireland: the Irish Protestants, 1649-1770* (New Haven, 2003)

³⁴ Maxine Berg, *Luxury & Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2005); Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford (eds.), *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe, 1650-1850* (Manchester, 1999)

³⁵ For example, see: A.P.W. Malcomson, *The Pursuit of the Heiress: Aristocratic Marriage in Ireland, 1750-1820* (Belfast, 1982); Malcomson, *The Extraordinary Career of the 2nd Earl of Massereene, 1743-1805* (Belfast, 1972); Malcomson, *Virtues of a Wicked Earl: The Life and Legend of William Sydney Clements, 3rd Earl of Leitrim* (Dublin, 2009)

existence for Ireland's landed and political classes. This range of scholarship, burgeoning for the landed classes of eighteenth century Ireland, and established for the elite of nineteenth century England and Scotland, does not yet exist for the aristocracy of Ireland in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In no field of study is this more apparent than dress, an issue that dominated the lives of the United Kingdom's wealthiest families, but which has been largely ignored as an area of interest by Irish historians of the modern period. This imbalance may be, in part, because of the inherent connection of the sartorial choices of the landed classes to the fashion worlds of London and Paris, but the assumption (and the unexamined nature of this topic leaves this as only an assumption) that this is true has rendered this field unexplored. The works of Christopher Breward and Elizabeth Wilson on fashion in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Britain and the United States have brought forward a number of questions about the examination of male and female dress in society,³⁶ and these questions have helped begin to illuminate within this work the important role clothing may have played within aristocratic society in Ulster.

To an extent, the world of nineteenth and early twentieth century fashion has been associated primarily with upper and middle class women, who have been viewed as the chief (or sometimes, sole) consumers in the growing industry. Wilson's theories, however, place an undue emphasis on the requirements made for young women, thereby virtually ignoring the huge role fashion played in the lives of all socially active aristocrats. The ability of dress to express in visual form a variety of social, individual, and economic functions was an important aspect of elite society.³⁷ More recently, Christopher Breward has argued that this theory is not applicable to the consumer environment, emphasising the interaction of men within the realm of shopping, fashion, and personal appearance, and the contradictions inherent in the twin ideals of the innocent wife and mother and the rapacious feminine consumer.³⁸ Breward has criticised treatment of fashion within a feminine context as having obscured patterns of masculine consumption, and as having introduced 'a blanket acceptance

³⁶ Christopher Breward, *The Hidden Consumer: Masculinities, Fashion and City Life, 1860-1914* (Manchester, 1999); Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (London, 1985)

³⁷ Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*, p.3

³⁸ Breward, *The Hidden Consumer*, p.3

of patriarchy as the only key for understanding masculine motivations.³⁹ Similarly, Wilson has identified the concept of fashion consumption as a feminine practice as a simplified ideal and a historical cliché, rather than a reality of nineteenth century life.⁴⁰ Despite the emphasis by many twentieth-century fashion historians on a 'great masculine renunciation' of fashion in the early nineteenth century, the sources for the aristocracy of the north of Ireland demonstrate that fashion and appearance continued to be extremely important for men, as well as women.

Within Ireland, those studies that have been made into the cultural world and daily lives of the nineteenth and twentieth century aristocracy have been dominated by a largely memoir-style history, elegiac in character and often inspired by family connections to what are presented as vanished landed clans. Mark Bence-Jones' *The Twilight of the Ascendancy* and Peter Somerville-Large's *The Irish Country House: A Social History* are two such works, where personal anecdote is combined with archival, social, and architectural research.⁴¹ These studies give a specifically Irish picture of nineteenth and twentieth century landed life, but one that lacks analytical vigour or a place within the wider context of the social and cultural literature of the period. In many ways, these books are a late-twentieth century continuation of the culture of memoir-writing which began among the landed classes in the early twentieth century, and which reached its peak in the interwar years.⁴² Memoirs, autobiographies, and family biographies were published with increasing frequency as the twentieth century progressed. These memoirs have contributed to the source material for this study, but hold a peculiar place between fiction and primary material, representative as they are of the perceptions and ideas of how aristocrats felt their lives would be interpreted by the third decade of the twentieth century, as much as they are of how these lives were lived twenty or more years before. These sources are extremely useful, but like any material, they must be looked at carefully as managed manifestations of aristocratic life, rather than completely unbiased and accurate accounts. Memoirs, especially those published in the interwar years, are invariably rose-tinted, and are often dedicated to aggrandising the lost world that preceded the destruction of the Great War. Like the family records, however, the bias of

³⁹ *ibid.*, p.9

⁴⁰ Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*, p.29

⁴¹ Mark Bence-Jones, *The Twilight of the Ascendancy* (London, 1987); Peter Somerville-Large, *The Irish Country House: A Social History* (London, 1995)

⁴² Elizabeth Grubgeld, *Anglo-Irish Autobiography: Class, Gender and the Forms of Narrative* (Dublin, 2004), p.xx

the memoir is indicative of aristocratic culture in itself: part of the value of these works lies in their role as individual interpretations of larger trends and events.

A great deal of the existing secondary material on cultural Ireland in this period concentrates on literature, both that of the memoir class, such as Elizabeth Grubgeld's *Anglo-Irish Autobiography: Class, Gender and the Forms of Narrative*, and treatments of literature in a wider sense as it was found in fiction and the media. Otto Rauchbauer's integration of literary study into the world of the Big House in Ireland provides an introduction to the intermeshed environment of the literature and history of some of Ireland's landed families.⁴³ Gillian McIntosh's *The Force of Culture* is an important examination of the literary and media-produced elements of Northern Irish culture in the twentieth century, including analysis of the histories of Lord Ernest Hamilton in the 1910s and 1920s.⁴⁴ The detailed analysis of the literary record of Irish memoirs in Grubgeld's work, and McIntosh's exploration of the distinctive creation of literary culture in Northern Ireland in the twentieth century, have influenced the ways sources were used within this work.⁴⁵ R.F. Foster and F.S.L. Lyons have looked at the literary production of Ireland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries more generally, providing a basis for comparison with the other cultural aspects of the lives of the elite in the north of Ireland.⁴⁶ As a guide for how family letters can be similarly used as a literary form, as a tool of social credit, and as a source for cultural research, Sarah Pearsall's work on the letters of eighteenth century transatlantic families has been invaluable.⁴⁷

The examination of specific individuals by historians has offered important perspectives on their conscious contributions to their families at large. The Londonderry family has been widely studied, with scholarly biographies of the 7th Marquess and of the

⁴³ Otto Rauchbauer, *The Big House in Anglo-Irish Literature* (Dublin, 1992)

⁴⁴ Gillian McIntosh, *The Force of Culture: Unionist Identities in Twentieth Century Ireland* (Cork, 1999). Also see: Alvin Jackson, "Irish Unionism" in D. George Boyce and Alan O'Day, *The Making of Modern Irish History: Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy* (London, 1996), pp.120-140

⁴⁵ The weight placed in these two works on the production of Anglo-Irish memoir, on the one hand, and on the creation of a distinctively 'Ulster' literature on the other, has led to the separation of material from earlier drafts of this thesis into another work, the earliest manifestation of which is provisionally entitled 'Writing Elite Ulster: the role of regionality in the early-twentieth century works of the aristocracy in the north of Ireland'.

⁴⁶ R.F. Foster, *W.B. Yeats: A Life. I: The Apprentice Mage, 1865-1914* (Oxford, 1997); R.F. Foster, *W.B. Yeats: A Life. II: The Arch-Poet, 1915-1939* (Oxford, 2003); F.S.L Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine* (London, 1973); F.S.L. Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland, 1890-1939* (Oxford, 1979); F.S.L. Lyons and R.A.J. Hawkins (eds.), *Ireland Under the Union: Varieties of Tension* (Oxford, 1980)

⁴⁷ Pearsall, *Atlantic Families*

politically active Marchionesses of Londonderry, updating the less academic Londonderry biographical machine begun in the mid-twentieth century.⁴⁸ Diane Urquhart's recent research on the marchionesses of Londonderry has been particularly revealing, and demonstrates how these women used, in the political realm, many of the principles which also dictated their lives culturally, especially in the creation and sustainment of the Londonderry legacy through the use of published works, architectural installations, and ancestral references within portraiture. The recent treatment of Shane Leslie by Otto Rauchbauer has shed light on the eccentric literary career and personal life of its subject, offering a more rigorous adjunct to the twentieth-century portraits of Leslie life offered by Shane Leslie's daughter, Anita.⁴⁹ Rauchbauer's research has been comprehensively undertaken on two continents, providing a great deal of information its subject, despite failing to convince that Leslie's connections within the world of twentieth century literature earned him a place among the luminaries of Ireland's contemporary literary scene. Wider family biographies, such as Peter Marson's *Belmore: The Lowry Corrys of Castle Coole, 1646-1913*,⁵⁰ give a picture, if an unquestioning one, of the family perspective of ascendancy and decline. Recent biographies of more peripheral figures in the worlds of politics and the arts offer additional contexts of the climate around these figures, both in the world of Ulster politics before the turn of the twentieth century, and in the cultural world of Ireland and Britain at this time.⁵¹

However, these individual biographies and monographs on the whole fail to look at the collective element of these families, and therefore provide little depth of analysis about the wider group, or about what the individual movements of these families meant within their society. Accordingly, works like Urquhart's *The Ladies of Londonderry* fail to place the Londonderrys within their own social world; rather, because of their immense wealth, lofty

⁴⁸ N.C. Fleming, *The Marquess of Londonderry: Aristocracy, Power and Politics in Britain and Ireland* (London, 2005); Urquhart, *The Ladies of Londonderry*; H. Montgomery Hyde, *Londonderry house and its pictures* (London, 1937); H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Londonderrys a family portrait* (London, 1979); Gervase Jackson-Stops and H. Montgomery Hyde, *Mount Stewart, County Down* [National Trust] (London, 1978); Edith Londonderry, *Retrospect* (London, 1938); Edith Londonderry, *Frances Anne. The life and times of Frances Anne, Marchioness of Londonderry, and her husband Charles, third Marquess of Londonderry* (London, 1958). Edith, marchioness of Londonderry had a prolific writing career from the 1920s until her death, and was, in some ways, carrying on an earlier tradition, in which her mother-in-law, Theresa, marchioness of Londonderry, began penning family histories, including *Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh* (London, 1904).

⁴⁹ Otto Rauchbauer, *Shane Leslie: Sublime Failure* (Dublin, 2009)

⁵⁰ Peter Marson, *Belmore: The Lowry Corrys of Castle Coole, 1646-1913* (Belfast, 2007)

⁵¹ Jackson, *Colonel Edward Saunderson*; Kenneth McConkey, *Sir John Lavery* (Edinburgh, 1993); Sinead McCoole, *Hazel: A Life of Lady Lavery, 1880-1935* (Dublin, 1996)

connections, and social panache they are presented as standing alone beyond the generality of other Irish landed families. By looking at the most extraordinary of these families as a part of a community defined by income, status, and geography, their lives can be re-examined as existing within the larger society of the aristocracy in the north of Ireland. During the period under examination in this study, this group emphasised the important place they held within the wider supranational British elite, as well as increasingly developing some traits which began to set them apart from peers in Britain and in the rest of Ireland.

In this study the lives of the aristocracy of the north of Ireland are examined topically, analysing the role of elite culture during the transformation of the political and economic roles of the landed classes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in order to provide a image of an occupied past. The topics of discussion have been chosen to engage with some of the greater weaknesses in the existing historiography, and also reflect the areas in which archival and material sources are most abundant. Within this study, not every family will form an equal part of every chapter: some families have fuller records than others; some families directed their interests into one area rather than another; some families were more dedicated to the promotion and preservation of their written, material, published, or archival records, and therefore provide a great wealth of information. That said, the combined direction of their records illuminates the lives of this group as a whole, as well as offering insights into the specific interests and experiences of each family, as well as of individual members of these families.

The second chapter of the thesis will look at elements of the aristocratic marriage network as it functioned for the elite in the north of Ireland. The chapter aims to show the ways in which the marriage networks of these families were used to support their day-to-day lives. The ways in which marriage networks were used by these families both encouraged ideas about community within the locality and across the United Kingdom, and demonstrate how the elite were able to adapt their culture during a time of recognised change. The integration of new types of families into the circuit of elite kinship and the use of the growing printed media were means by which the elite attempted secure their control in the social and cultural world of twentieth century Britain. The previous neglect in the social and cultural record of these families has led to a lack of examination of their nineteenth and twentieth century marital patterns; accordingly, this research provides not only new detail about the marriage patterns of the aristocracy of Ulster, but also looks at these alliances as a part of the

larger cultural world, and as manifestations of conscious adaptation on the part of these families during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Previous scholarship on elite marriage in Ireland after the eighteenth century has been limited. This work strives to begin to redress this imbalance, offering some insight into aristocratic practices in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as has been achieved by historians like A.P.W. Malcomson for the eighteenth century and Deborah Wilson for the century up to 1850.⁵² Largely, the secondary literature on aristocratic marriage in Ireland has been born from work on the role of elite women within the political sphere, such as the research of Kim Reynolds,⁵³ though the field is currently expanding through the research of historians like Reynolds and Wilson. Within English and British history, there is already a substantial body of research on this subject for the period under examination in this study, best represented by the work of Patricia Jalland, especially *Women, Marriage, and Politics, 1860-1914*.⁵⁴ The findings of the research in this work demonstrate many continuities both with predecessors within Ireland, and with the lives of contemporaries in England, but also show how some of the changes which faced the elite in the late twentieth century were manifested within the elite families of Ulster.

A detailed exploration of aristocratic marriage networks also refutes an assertion made about the role of women within aristocratic society by many historians of the upper classes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In *The Decline of the Big House in Ireland* Terence Dooley justifies his decision to deal minimally with the question of gender within the context of the declining fortunes of the Irish elite by remarking that this is ‘a reflection of the non-status of women at this time.’⁵⁵ He goes on to quote David Cannadine, asserting that ‘the wealth, status, power, and class consciousness of the landed classes... were preponderantly masculine assets and attributes.’⁵⁶ This is patently untrue: wealth was a commodity brought by both men and women to the marriage table, and was often offered as an exchange for the high status of the other partner. The visible power held by the male aristocrat as a Justice of the Peace, Member of Parliament, or landowner was only one aspect

⁵² Deborah Wilson, *Women, Marriage and Property in Wealthy Landed Families in Ireland, 1750-1850* (Manchester, 2009)

⁵³ Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society*

⁵⁴ Patricia Jalland, *Women, Marriage, and Politics, 1860-1914* (Oxford, 1988)

⁵⁵ Dooley, *Decline of the Big House*, p.16

⁵⁶ Dooley, *Decline of the Big House*, pp.16-17; Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, p.7

of the complex network of elite authority, and women were as involved in exercising informal methods of power as their brothers, fathers, and husbands. Unfortunately, many historians have fallen into the trap of equating property ownership with power, and scholars of marriage in Ireland like Wilson have from time to time engaged with the same simplified concept of ‘power’ that limited the scope of the work of Cannadine and Dooley.⁵⁷

As will be made clear in the following analysis, class-consciousness was an integral part of the lives of all aristocrats, male and female alike. As Kim Reynolds has discussed in her work, gender was only one aspect of the identity of the aristocratic female. ‘In relation to their own families,’ she has written, ‘aristocratic women were first and foremost women. In relation to the rest of the world, they were aristocrats first and last.’⁵⁸ Within the elite world, the loyalty of aristocratic women was to their families, rather than to their sex, and they shared with their husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons, as well as their mothers, sisters, and daughters, an interest in securing dynastic success. To this end, aristocratic marriage allied families from around Britain and Ireland in a relatively culturally and socially cohesive socio-economic group, and because of the important role women played in arranging, preserving, and constructing these alliances, their power within this realm was significant. Society, as it was constructed by the upper classes in the early and mid-nineteenth century, and as it developed to incorporate the changing social currents of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, consolidated the powers of the landed classes in such a way that both men and women held control over its mechanisms and functions, and were restricted by its rules and forms. As scholars like Reynolds and Breward have recognised, gender was not the sum of identity for aristocratic women in this period any more than it was for aristocratic men.⁵⁹ The priority of the Ulster aristocracy in creating marriage networks was the expansion of the dynastic influence and society, as this required the participation of the entire family.

The third chapter turns to the upbringing and education of the children of the region’s aristocratic clans, aiming to show how the continuity of elite education promoted the same landed ideals across generations. Within the education of aristocratic children, the elite community was central, and the shared priorities of this community, which encompassed the immediate and extended family, as well as the circuit of families connected by marriage from

⁵⁷ Wilson, *Women, Marriage, and Property*, p.40

⁵⁸ Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society*, p.4

⁵⁹ Breward, *The Hidden Consumer*, p.16

across the United Kingdom, were clearly expressed in the nursery, the school-room, and the public school, as well as on the elite estate. This aspect of aristocratic culture in the north of Ireland demonstrates a level of continuity over the fifty-five year period of this study, and alterations to landed patterns of education were less significant than in other areas of this group's cultural life. This continuity was one of the priorities of elite life during this period: the heads of Ulster's aristocratic families were dedicated to giving their children an education which emphasised their role in the supranational community of Ireland and Britain's elite, and this early training would colour their cultural decisions later in life, as it had shaped the lives and priorities of their ancestors. The communal nature of the aristocratic world was of key importance in preserving the shared culture of the elite, and to integrating new forces within this group, and this was reflected in the educational priorities of this group, rendering the education of these families one of the least distinctive aspects of their culture in the period between 1870 and 1925.

Literature on elite childhood in nineteenth-century Ireland is very slight: there exists a substantial body on country house upbringings in England, and for Britain in a more general sense (although with an extremely Anglo-centric slant), but almost none of this includes Ireland. Work by historians such as Deborah Gorham and Jessica Gerard has provided some more general context for the structure of elite life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while the more general work of Anthony Fletcher on English childhood has offered some context for changes across time.⁶⁰ The literature on public schools and the life of young men away from their homes is more substantial, and received a great deal of attention from historians in the 1960s and 1970s, including monographs by Rupert Wilkinson and Brian Gardner.⁶¹ However, these works beg to be updated, and none offer a perspective on what the further distance or national divisions inherent in the political life of the United Kingdom would have meant to a young man from Ulster attending Eton or Harrow at the turn of the century. More generally, the work on childhood contained within this thesis has been guided in many ways by authors who did not expressly write on childhood: the use of contemporary memoirs as a source within this chapter has been influenced by Elizabeth Grubgeld's

⁶⁰ Anthony Fletcher, *Growing up in England: The Experience of Childhood, 1600-1914* (London, 2008); Jessica Gerard, *Country House Life: Family and Servants, 1815-1914* (Oxford, 1994), p.67; Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* (London, 1982), p.21

⁶¹ Brian Gardner, *The Public School: An Historical Survey* (London, 1973), pp.35-36; Rupert Wilkinson, *The Prefects: British Leadership and the Public School Tradition* (London, 1964), p.67

research on the Anglo-Irish novel, and especially on her views of the supposedly ‘idyllic’ concept of the Protestant memoir;⁶² ideas about education, continuity over the time span of this study and beyond, and the definition of ‘cultures’ have been born, at least in part, out of the work of Ross McKibbin;⁶³ and finally, the work of Pierre Bourdieu on the instillation of aesthetic and social values within middle and upper class children, encapsulated in his book, *Distinction*, shaped the initial approach to the construction and analysis of this chapter.⁶⁴ Largely, however, this chapter has been shaped most by the dearth of existing historical literature on the childhood of the aristocracy during this period, and by the fulsome nature of the primary material on this subject.

The discussion in the fourth chapter of this thesis will concern the building work on the principal homes of these families, examining alterations both on the exteriors and the interiors of these homes as manifestations of technological, social, and aesthetic change within the cultural world of elite in the north of Ireland. The chapter will then analyse the ways in which changes to the fabric of these buildings were demonstrative of the larger ideals that drove aristocratic culture during this period, namely, ideas about conscious adaptation, the sustainment of an elite community, and the creation of an idea of ‘tradition’ as a means to secure lasting elite relevance in modern society. The analysis in this chapter will look closely at the role of historicism in architecture in the north of Ireland during this period, and especially at the popularity of Gothic Revival styles as indicative of the wider intentions of the landed classes. The aristocracy of the province also allied themselves within a wider community of architectural patronage by their use of these particular styles and of the architects who specialised in these styles. Within this chapter, it is demonstrated that through the influence on the architectural work of Ulster’s landed classes of same themes that directed other aspects of their culture, these families manifested a continuity of ideology across their cultural world.

Of the aspects of culture examined within this thesis, the most substantial body of secondary work on the cultural history of Ulster specifically, and on Ireland more generally, is on the architecture of the period, and on the construction and fabric of the homes of the

⁶² Grubgeld, *Anglo-Irish Autobiography*

⁶³ McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*

⁶⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Translated by Richard Nice (London, 1984)

elite during the eighteenth through twentieth centuries. However, the contribution and interaction of the elite with their homes in terms of late nineteenth century building work has been glossed over significantly, presenting the fifty-five years from 1870 to 1925 as a period of retrenchment for financial reasons, rather than examining it for the specific influences which changed aristocratic building patterns. This attitude has been apparent in the work of Terence Dooley, who has attributed what he views as a decline in the building among the landed class from the turn of the twentieth century onwards to the vagaries of elite finance in this period. The sample used by Dooley in his research, however, was comprised of families who were based in those counties which would later form the Republic of Ireland, deliberately not looking at the situation north of the border formalised in 1925. The work of Cyril Barrett and Jeanne Sheehy, on the other hand, has included the province of Ulster, and supports Dooley's finding in a general sense, characterising the late nineteenth century as a time during which architecture was dominated by middle class and merchant building, rather than landed patronage.⁶⁵

Individual studies of the homes of the aristocracy of the north of Ireland are varied in quality and form, ranging from portraits of these houses in twentieth century issues of *Country Life* magazine, to grand personal portrayals of home-life in a Georgian mansion, to studies of the houses commissioned and completed by heritage bodies.⁶⁶ These have supplemented architectural reference works and more specific scholarly studies of the architecture of Ireland in general, and Ulster specifically, to form of picture of the built environment of the time that is more substantial than for the other aspects of elite culture studied within this work.⁶⁷ Studies of other homes in the area have offered a comparison

⁶⁵ Cyril Barrett & Jeanne Sheehy, 'Visual Arts and Society, 1850-1900', pp.436-474, in Vaughan, *A New History of Ireland*

⁶⁶ Gervase Jackson-Stops, 'Baronscourt, Co. Tyrone: I', *Country Life*, 26 July 1979; Gervase Jackson-Stops, 'Crom Castle, Co. Fermanagh: I', *Country Life*, 2 June 1988; Countess of Enniskillen (Nancy Henderson), *Florence Court: My Irish Home* (Monaghan, 1972); Marchioness of Londonderry, *Mount Stewart* (Belfast, 1956); Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, *Clandeboyne* (Belfast, 1985); The National Trust, *Florence Court, Co. Fermanagh* (London, 1979); Lyn Gallagher and Dick Rogers, *Castle, coast and cottage: the National Trust in Northern Ireland* (Belfast, 1992); UAHS, *Northern Gardens: Gardens and Parks of Outstanding Historic Interest in Northern Ireland* (Belfast, 1982)

⁶⁷ Maurice Craig, *Architecture in Ireland* (Dublin, 1978); Craig, *Classic Irish houses of the middle size* (London, 1976); Craig, *Dublin, 1660-1860*; Hugh Dixon, *An Introduction to Ulster Architecture* (Belfast, 1975); The Knight of Glin, *The Irish Country House* (London, 2010); Sean D. O'Reilly, *Irish houses and gardens: from the archives of Country Life* (London, 1998)

between the architectural commissions of the families included in this case study, and the homes of other wealthy northern families.⁶⁸

The sporting and leisure pursuits of Ulster's landed classes are the focus of Chapter 5, 'Symbols of Power: Aristocratic Sport on the Ulster Estate', which will look at the activities of the elite on their estates as one of the clearest manifestations of regional distinctiveness among these families. From the 1870s through the 1920s, Ireland's northern aristocracy engaged with leisure patterns that were traditionally associated with the landed classes, while simultaneously adapting these practises to suit the social, economic, and cultural contexts in which they lived. The sporting schedule of the landed classes was largely facilitated by their patterns of society and entertainment, which were dominated throughout this period by house parties, many of which were specifically designed to make sport on elite estates possible. At the same time, these parties were important functions within the wider community of the landed classes, acting as means by which introductions, alliances, and friendships were made. The offering of a distinctive, attractive sporting schedule on the estates of these families helped them to function better within landed society, securing the marital, political, and cultural contacts that kept the landed classes at the centre of Britain and Ireland's circuit of power.

During the late nineteenth century yachting and sailing became a pursuit which served to encourage peers from across the United Kingdom to elite estates in the north of Ireland. The geography of the province of Ulster encouraged these pursuits both on the lakes, of which Lough Erne was the principal, and along the extensive seacoasts, especially off county Down and on Strangford Lough, near the estates of the Londonderry, Kilmorey, and Dufferin families. As has been recognised by Alvin Jackson, boating served to connect both the existing community of British and Irish landed families, and to forge new ties with European and American elite society,⁶⁹ at a time when the sport was increasing in popularity. However, Jackson's work has not included a sustained examination of the role yachting and sailing played in the culture of these families. The emphasis within the north of Ireland on yachting and sailing may have been developed to compensate for the lack of other pursuits: while Irish landed society in the nineteenth century has been characterised as centred on fox-hunting, in

⁶⁸ Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, *Ballywalter Park* (Belfast, 1985); UAHS, *Hillsborough Castle*. (Belfast, 1993); J.A.K. Dean, *The gate lodges of Ulster* (Belfast, 1994)

⁶⁹ Jackson, *Colonel Edward Saunderson*

the north of Ireland, there was no significant culture of this sport until well into the twentieth century, while efforts toward investing in the equestrian aspects of the Ulster estate met with very measured success at this time.

Boating was not the only sporting pursuit practised on the estates of these families, however, and shooting played an important part in the social lives of these families. Within this chapter the role of game-hunting will be examined, analysing the consequences of social change in the late nineteenth and twentieth century for the sport on these estates. As has been mentioned, there was not a significant culture of fox-hunting in the north of Ireland during this period, although it was pursued avidly by members of these families off their estates, both elsewhere in Ireland and in England. Source material on the sporting life of the elite for this period is, however, dominated by examinations of fox-hunting, both in dedicated monographs and within wider cultural studies in which sport plays only a passing role.⁷⁰ None of these studies, however, are dedicated to the study of the province's sporting culture, although the work of Terence Dooley and Mark Bence-Jones on the elite in Ireland contains some material on sport.⁷¹ In the north of Ireland, an alternate, less dominant, hunting culture existed: hare coursing. While hare-coursing never held a dominant place within the sporting schedule of the landed classes, the sport did play an important role in the countryside in the north of Ireland, and provides a contrast with the divisive nature of fox hunting after the 1880s in the way a wide-range of rural society was attracted to the pursuit. The related breeding of dogs for coursing, as well as for hunting, temporarily became an important pursuit on Ulster's aristocratic estates, for a time eclipsing the less successful horse-breeding programme that was embarked on by some of these families at the end of the nineteenth century.

The central role of the estate within the history of the aristocracy in the north of Ireland has been recognised by a number of scholars in the past, but despite this, the activities which they engaged in on their lands most—their leisure activities—have been largely neglected in the secondary literature. No regionally-specific studies have been conducted on the sporting

⁷⁰ Raymond Carr, *English Fox Hunting: A History* (London, 1976); Claude Costecalde and Jack Gallagher, *Hunting in Ireland: A Noble Tradition* (Ireland, 2004); L.P Curtis Jr., 'Stopping the Hunt, 1881-82: An Aspect of the Irish Land War', in C.H.E. Philpin (ed), *Nationalism and Popular Protest in Ireland* (Cambridge, 1987); Barnard, *Making the Grand Figure*; Colley, *Britons*; Thompson, *English Landed Society*; Cannadine, *Decline of the British Aristocracy*, p.364

⁷¹ Bence-Jones, *Twilight of the Ascendancy*, p.1; Dooley, *The Decline of the Big House*

practices of the landed classes in Ireland, despite the essential nature of these pursuits within landed life. The concentration of the study of the estate on aspects of land purchase and agrarian conflict has obscured the ways the sporting practises on aristocratic estates in the north of Ireland were used as tools to help protect the cultural world of these families, and to secure their role both within rural society in their localities, as well as their place within the wider community of the British and Irish landed classes. The development of a locally-based sporting culture, which was different from that which predominated elsewhere in Ireland, and separate from that in Britain, has been neglected in the history of the United Kingdom, and is an important subject in need of detailed treatment by historians.

The sixth chapter will look at aspects of the way artistic collections, specifically painted collections, were managed and used by the aristocracy of Ulster in their homes between 1870 and 1925. The art world in the north of Ireland has received some recent scholarly attention, notably by Eileen Black. However, Black's work on arts patronage in Belfast in the late nineteenth century concentrates entirely on the urban production and patronage of art during this period, and does not look at the activities of Irish patrons or the development of art collecting outside the metropolis.⁷² The work of Kenneth McConkey on early twentieth century painting crosses these boundaries more effectively, integrating the paintings of Sir John Lavery and other artists of the pre-war years with the wider art world in London and in Ireland, but is centred primarily on the creation of works of art, particularly by Lavery and his contemporaries, and gives little attention to their role in the cultural lives of their patrons and owners.⁷³

The chapter will examine the creation and perpetuation of aristocratic 'taste' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, looking at the ways young aristocrats were encouraged to develop an understanding of what was collectively considered as valuable, and the ways in which these values were articulated within the homes of these families. The development of this taste, and the study thereof, is dependent on scholarship that has looked at similar topics in the early modern period and in the eighteenth century, such as Toby Barnard's studies of material culture in Ireland.⁷⁴ Additionally, the work of Fintan Cullen on

⁷² Eileen Black, *Art in Belfast, 1760-1888: Art Lovers or Philistines?* (Dublin, 2006)

⁷³ Kenneth McConkey, *Memory and Desire: Painting in Britain and Ireland at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (London, 2002)

⁷⁴ Barnard, *Making the Grand Figure*, p.151

Irish portraiture, and of Cyril Barrett and Jeanne Sheehy on the role of the visual arts within Irish society at large during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, has offered a context in which the specific artistic network of these families can be studied.⁷⁵ The place held by art and the elite art collection within the culture of the landed classes of Ulster in the late nineteenth century reflects the ability of these families to adapt their social and cultural patterns to reflect the changing climate around them, as well as emphasising their central concerns with the perpetuation of the culturally united community of Britain and Ireland's aristocracy, and with ideas about tradition and heritage within their homes. The analysis will then examine the means by which elite collections were used as commodities, concentrating on the development of an art market in the late nineteenth century for paintings from British and Irish country houses both in Europe and in the United States. The creation of the art market has been studied in depth, both by Gerald Reitlinger in the 1960s, and more recently by Peter Watson, and these overviews of the development of the arts trade in the nineteenth century have provided a framework for the contexts of the sales made by Ulster's elite families in this period.⁷⁶

From the end of the nineteenth century onward, the aristocracy of the north of Ireland sought to adapt their culture in order to best preserve both the principles which directed their society and their social and cultural relevance. For the families in this case study, London played an enormous role in this as the primary location (with Dublin as a secondary arena) where they were able to connect with the bulk of the elite community. Secondary material on the interaction of Irish peers in general, and the aristocracy of Ulster of these families specifically, with the metropolitan scene in London and in Dublin is limited, although the material on the society and Society of London itself during this period is significant.⁷⁷ The

⁷⁵ Fintan Cullen, *The Irish Face: Redefining the Irish Portrait* (London, 2004); Cyril Barrett and Jeanne Sheehy, "Visual arts and society, 1850-1900" in Vaughan, *A New History of Ireland VI*, p.438

⁷⁶ Gerald Reitlinger, *The Economics of Taste: The Rise and Fall of Picture Prices, 1760-1960* (London, 1961); Peter Watson, *From Manet to Manhattan: The Rise of the Modern Art Market* (London, 1993)

⁷⁷ Some of the works which have been most influential on this specific subject include: Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), which inspired the development of early research into the subjects within this thesis into the arguments about the intentional creation of historic and traditional elements of elite society during times of flux; the work of Diana Crane, Mica Nava, and Christopher Breward on the role of fashion and modernity within the cityscape (Diana Crane, *Fashion and its Social Agendas: Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing* (Chicago, 2000), Mica Nava, "Modernity's Disavowal: Women, the City, and the Department Store", in Pasi Falk and Colin Campbell, *The Shopping Experience* (London, 1997), Breward, *The Hidden Consumer*); the work of Amy Milne-Smith as an analytical update to older tomes on London's clubland penned in the first half of the twentieth century (Amy Milne-Smith, "A Flight to Domesticity? Making a Home in the Gentlemen's Club of London, 1880-

work of Diane Urquhart on the role of the Londonderry women as political manipulators offers some of the most significant coverage of this subject, but the specificity of the subject matter has led to an over-emphasis within Urquhart's work in the particularity of the Londonderrys in their preference for the social opportunities on offer in London, over Dublin.⁷⁸ In contrast to Urquhart's findings, the research within this thesis demonstrates that the aristocracy of Ulster was more likely to turn toward London than to Dublin, setting them apart from the wider Irish landed classes. Instead, these families, with their immense wealth, high status, and elite social connections, favoured London as the centre of their culturally unionist world, a space in which they could re-engage with the wider British and Irish elite, and an arena in which they were offered opportunities through the use of the media and the interest of the British public in 'Society', to reassert their cultural relevance.

The intention of the final chapter of this thesis is to begin to redress this imbalance, looking at the ways in which the aristocracy of the north of Ireland may have used society in London, and to a lesser extent in Dublin, in a way that was distinctive from peers from the rest of the United Kingdom, and which reflected their cultural priorities as examined in the rest of this thesis. Through the establishment and continuance of the exclusive community that the media increasingly referred to as Society, these families integrated themselves within groups considered to be Britain's cultural leaders in fields as diverse as the arts, literature, politics, fashion, and sport, while maintaining the exclusivity of Society which made entry desirable to the upwardly mobile and information interesting to the middle classes. The principles of adaptation, community, and tradition which directed much of the cultural investment of these families in other areas also influenced their interaction in other area of metropolitan life. Finally, these principles were also in abundance at the elite clubs of the aristocracy of Ulster, from the establishment of The Ark at Londonderry House in the 1910s to the wider phenomenon of the gentleman's club, a dominant force in the metropolitan life of every well-born man in the period. In their engagement with London as a central location of their social lives, these families reflected their broader intentions to create and sustain a community of the supranational aristocracy within the United Kingdom as a whole, rather

1914", *Journal of British Studies* (October 2006), pp.796-818, Ralph Nevill, *London Clubs: Their History and Treasures* (London, 1911)); additionally, those historians who have been more generally influential in this work, like Barnard, Cannadine, Colley, Jackson, Dooley, Purdue, and Urquhart, have, in their various works, also offered perspectives on elite life in London, whether general to the British and Irish aristocracy, or specific to this time period or to Ulster itself.

⁷⁸ Urquhart, *The Ladies of Londonderry*, p.6

demonstrating the idiosyncracies which marked out their more distinctive patronage in the realms of architecture, or engagement with the local sporting scene within the nine-county province.

The most privileged families in the north of Ireland were able to use their understanding of the cultural mores of Britain and Ireland as tools to adapt during a time of political and economic change. In this way, elite culture as they preserved it was able to survive into the mid-twentieth century, securing an intrinsic aristocratic hold on the fields of art, architecture, interior and garden design, and fashion through their use of networks of kinship, patronage, and the media. This thesis sets out to challenge an idea of a late nineteenth and early twentieth century aristocratic ‘decline’ by positing an alternative theory of conscious cultural adaptation. As the economic climate and legislative changes of the time forced the aristocracy toward measures of retrenchment, they sacrificed portions of their estates, artistic holdings, and social traditions in order to preserve the greater whole of their way of life and material inheritance.

In 1921, each of the twelve families under examination in this study still held more than 10,000 acres of land in the north of Ireland. Despite fifty years of land acts intended to alter the ownership of Ireland’s estates, economic challenges both direct and indirect, and widespread socio-political upheaval, each family remained in possession of that which defined them as a class: their central landed estate. As a part of this, these families also retained their incomes, at least in part, both from the lands they still held, and from investments made on the back of land sales. The years between 1870 and 1925, then, should not be seen as a period of decline, but rather as a transitional, adaptive period in which these families transferred their holdings from a primarily landed investment to a mix of landed and other investments, and as a time during which they revolutionised their culture in order to keep up with the changes of the modern world. The pre-existing patterns of family life, leisure, and patronage of these families continued throughout this period. This sort of social and cultural adaptation had long been a part of elite life. Linda Colley has recognised this adaptation as an aspect of aristocratic culture in Britain and Ireland dating back to the

eighteenth century, noting both the tendency of recent historians to neglect this elite capacity for change and the ability of the landed classes to re-interpret their existing cultural patterns and lifestyle practises in a way which best enabled them to engage with contemporary social currents.⁷⁹ For Colley, it is these changes, not the alterations to the actual social composition of the landed elite, which defined aristocratic culture during the period she associates with the forging of the British nation.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the aristocracy of the north of Ireland demonstrated an equally marked pattern of adaptation, using tools traditionally associated with the landed classes (such as leisure activities and architectural patronage) to emphasise their families' identities as both British and developing their own conception of a specific regional identity for elite landed Ulster, while simultaneously embracing twentieth century advances like the growing role of printed and visual media, to strengthen the foundations of their role as the cultural arbiters of Britain and Ireland. As Ross McKibbin has recognised, the association between the media and mid-twentieth century ideas about glamour was already in existence before the Second World War.⁸⁰ The research within this thesis examines this relationship, and the ways in which it was created by the elite, emphasising how these aristocratic families were in the vanguard of the transformation of Britain and Ireland's reticent Victorian landed classes into an aristocracy steeped in Edwardian magnificence, Americanised twentieth-century glamour, and media savvy.

Increasingly, the elite additionally worked to regenerate their particular sense of community, bolstered by their patterns of interaction, entertainment, and education, and centred on the intricate networks of landed kinship. Related to this idea of the aristocratic community, but even more obvious in its effect on the attitude of the aristocrat, was the idea of inheritance and ancestral expectation. This was manifested in the aesthetic choices of the elite, especially in portraiture and home décor, in the expectations of schooling placed on the young aristocrat, and in the ingrained connection between land and landowner. The 'cultural unionism' (not to be confused with Unionism as an active political movement, or even unionism as an inactive set of political loyalties) of the aristocracy of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a semi-conscious system of beliefs and tendencies formed through and by the collective community of the aristocracy and landowning elite of the

⁷⁹ Colley, *Britons*, p.193

⁸⁰ McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, p.43

British Isles. A primary contributing factor to this cultural unionism was what Cannadine has referred to as the ‘supra-national’ nature of the landed classes in Britain, which bound families from England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales together through cross-national landownership. Crucially, the nature of elite landownership encouraged the establishment of links of kinship and marriage with families from across the United Kingdom. This group, tied by kinship, formed a community defined by their shared leisure practices, aesthetic tastes, and patterns of consumption, as well as a specific collective culture that would influence their political loyalties and economic decisions. These aristocratic families were part of a community that was bound together by political and economic views that were largely shared throughout the elite, but these views, such as the Unionism of the late nineteenth century, were actually born from the pre-existing cultural community, which transcended the national boundaries within the Union. The desire of aristocratic society in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to extend and preserve their collective culture—their ‘cultural unionism’—was manifested in various forms, and contributed to the importance placed by the aristocracy on supranational ties of family, of community, and of geographical and material heritage.

Linda Colley has seen this pan-British, supranational aristocracy as being born out the demographic crisis of the seventeenth century elite: the shift of landed property, the rising property values of the Celtic periphery, and the rising rates of intermarriage between families based in these four nations led to a cultural union between England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales that followed swiftly on the heels of the actual Union between the lion and the unicorn, and which pre-dated the political union of Ireland with Britain at the dawn of the nineteenth century.⁸¹ The roots of ‘cultural unionism’, like its political counterpart, can be found in the rising prosperity of Ireland in the nineteenth century: in the words of Alvin Jackson, Unionism as a political creed brought together disparate groups who, despite differences in politics, religion, and class, ‘consciously felt that their general way of life or even, explicitly, their ‘culture’ would otherwise be threatened.’⁸² The culture that was created, sustained, and exhibited by this group in the north of Ireland, previously examined by historians only in terms of the political and economic implications, was one that was largely based in the shared history, lineage, and prosperity of the supra-national aristocracy. As Jackson has recognised, it was the educational and economic similarities between British and

⁸¹ Colley, *Britons*, pp.157, 161-2, 193

⁸² Jackson, *The Ulster Party*, pp.4, 16; Brian Inglis, *West Britons* (London, 1962)

Irish Unionists that was of utmost importance to the political elite during this period;⁸³ at the same time, it was this cultural bond with Great Britain—manifested clearly in the domestic life, aesthetic patronage, and leisure practises of Ulster’s aristocracy—that compelled these families to support the idea of unionism in both their political and social realities throughout the nineteenth century.

During the period under examination in this study, an additional cultural shift may have occurred among these families. The deliberate ‘cultural unionism’ of the nineteenth century began to be supplemented, beginning from the 1880s, but more recognisably from the turn of the twentieth century, by an increased regional identity, which was expressed in the language, aesthetic investment, and sporting patterns of the premier families in the north of Ireland. This was manifested in the political involvement of these families, who increasingly turned to Orangeism as a means to counter the growing radicalism of the middle and working classes of the province. Those moderate loyalists like Ernest Hamilton, who in the 1880s scoffed at the ‘absurd and childish nonsense’ of civil war in Ireland, by the 1910s were happy to pen unionist histories of Ulster as a province, and eager to sign the Ulster Covenant.⁸⁴ The political manifestations of the increased ‘Ulsterisation’ of the region’s elite may have been born from the an increased differentiation of the cultural world of these families from both their neighbours in the rest of Ireland and in Great Britain. During this period, distinctive familial, artistic, and leisure practises grew within the province of Ulster, from the burgeoning of the yachting scene in southern Fermanagh and off the coast of county Down, to the increase of marriages of Ulster’s elite families within the province, to the development of a particular and distinctive architectural vernacular in the region which was displayed as clearly in renovations on the homes of Ulster’s aristocracy as it was in the town houses of the growing middle classes and the mercantile palaces of Belfast’s industrial barons.

While during the nineteenth century the aristocracy of the north of Ireland was viewed by their British contemporaries as a moderate force within Unionism, and turned to by their colleagues as points of contact in order to best curb the militancy of other Orange militants,⁸⁵ by the turn of the twentieth century, these families had begun to embrace a set of cultural

⁸³ Jackson, *The Ulster Party*, p.81

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p.127

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p.128

patterns which they pursued in conjunction with their continued patronage of the traditions that had allied them to the supranational aristocracy of Great Britain and Ireland as a whole. The international incomes of these families, as well as their educations, their patterns of marriage and landownership, and the patterns of interaction with a European, British, and Irish artistic and leisure world set them apart from many of their cultural and political sympathisers within the north of Ireland. However, by the turn of the twentieth century, these families had also already demonstrated an increasing awareness of their cultural distinctiveness as an Ulster aristocracy, patronizing not only local architects, artists, craftsmen, social and leisure clubs, and their distinctive styles, but also promoting these activities using local, British, and international media.

One of the ways in which these families promoted themselves as socially and culturally relevant, both within Great Britain and Ireland as a United Kingdom, and within Ulster as an individual province, was through the use of an idea of hereditary aristocracy as the historical leaders of the nations. In this, the aristocracy of the north of Ireland may follow the model set out by David Cannadine in his examination of the monarchy, circa 1820 to 1970, and which Jackson has also recognised as an aspect of the Orange Order in the 1880s.⁸⁶ As their actual authority in the realms of politics and finance declined, the premier families in the north of Ireland began to heighten the ceremonial and material aspects of their lives, linking their culture with an idea of a 'traditional' past. This is apparent in a number of aspects of their lives, including in the use of family tradition in the dressing of elite brides, in the referencing of a historical Scottish past in their architectural patronage, and in their leadership of an increasingly exclusive, formalised Society from the 1870s through the 1920s.

The result was that the aristocrats of the Edwardian era were more highly charged, more highly decorated, more socially aware, and more outwardly presented than their predecessors had been. Manifestations of this can be seen in many of the aspects of culture examined here, and were tied to their use of new means, such as the growing printed media, of promoting their social and cultural relevance within Britain and Ireland. Key for the use of this idea of 'tradition' in promoting a public image of the aristocracy was the way in which this was presented to the middle and working classes, especially through the increased coverage of elite weddings, special events, and homes received in newspapers and journals,

⁸⁶ Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*; Jackson, *The Ulster Party*, p.4

especially from around the turn of the twentieth century. An additional aspect of this was the increasingly intricate rules and regulations seen within both the leisured and the educational lives of these families, manifested in aspects of elite life from dress to behaviour to social introductions. The creation of a traditional, presentation-savvy aristocracy during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries corresponded with the simultaneous reinvention of the monarchy, and was tied to the same desire of these groups to retain social relevance, even in the face of waning constitutional powers.

ONE

CONTEXTS: ARISTOCRATIC POLITICS, ECONOMICS, AND LAND MANAGEMENT IN THE NORTH OF IRELAND 1870-1925

In 1878 John Bateman assembled a survey of the fortunes of the largest landowners in the United Kingdom, compiling a thick volume of the wealthiest and most powerful members of the nation as based on the Parliamentary records of the previous decade.¹ These years would later be viewed as the last of the ascendancy of the landowners of Ireland, although in truth, it had been a generation or more since this class had truly been in the ascendant. This chapter will briefly lay out the economic and political contexts of the lives of the aristocratic families included in this study, offering an overview of the well-examined political and economic climate that existed alongside their cultural world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Firstly, it will identify the families under examination, establishing the locations of their demesnes and the state of their homes and estates. These properties had an enormous role to play in securing aristocratic income and status, and in the continuation of the elite privileges and powers held by this group during the late nineteenth century. The chapter will then offer an overview of the political and economic changes that influenced aristocratic culture during the period of this study, outlining both their existing powers in the 1870s and the challenges that were presented to them in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The intention of this chapter is to provide a political and economic context, based on pre-existing historiography of the period and supplemented with primary material relevant to these families, for the analysis of aristocratic social and aesthetic culture in the remainder of the thesis.

¹ John Bateman, *The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1878)

This chapter will begin by introducing the twelve families under examination. While the emphasis of the work is on their collective decisions, these decisions were made by individuals, and the role each family member played in these families would affect the tenor of their lives in the half-century under examination here. The history of each family played an important part in establishing their place within the social hierarchy of Ireland and Britain, and in how these families viewed and presented themselves. Of even greater importance was the ownership of land by the head of the family: it was this which provided the fortunes of most of these families, and which offered them a place in the cultural world under examination here. Finally, the homes of these families, and the locations of their primary Ulster estate, played a central role in the daily lives of these families, shaping their interactions with other families in the locality, offering grounds for entertainment or opportunities for architectural improvement, and acting as a central location for the exercise of their sporting impulses and philanthropic duties. These factors are crucial in understanding the cultural world of the aristocracy of Ulster.

The chapter will then look at the role these families played within imperial, national, and local governance, offering an overview of the political context of their social and cultural world. In 1870, these families remained in a position of power that was not unlike that which they had held for more than a century: heads of families and their sons, brothers, and cousins served in Parliament at Westminster, as elected MPs, within the House of Lords, or as Representative Peers for Ireland. At home, the aristocracy dominated local government, serving as Lords Lieutenant of their home counties, as well as Justices of the Peace, magistrates, and county Sheriffs, roles that were echoed by the positions some peers held away from home as Imperial leaders, ambassadors, and diplomats. This political power was held in conjunction with a social pre-eminence that was tied to the close relationship between these families and the monarchy, and the service and friendship offered by these families to successive queens and kings secured their place at the centre of the governance of the United Kingdom, even as their political role was gradually diminished. This power was echoed in the dominance of the landed classes in the armed forces, which continued throughout this period despite multiple reforms intended to open up the military, and especially the officer class, to a wider range of candidates.

The challenges faced by the aristocracy due to the military reforms of the late nineteenth century were, however, negligible when compared to the changing currents of

politics and economics across the United Kingdom. The period of study for this thesis has been deliberately chosen to encompass some of the most sweeping legislative changes of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the effect of these challenges to aristocratic hegemony in Ireland generally, and in Ulster specifically, has been widely studied. The political timeline of these changes stretches from Gladstone's first Land Act in 1870 through the years of agricultural depression and agrarian disturbance of the following decade, and to the three important Acts of the early 1880s: the Land Acts of 1881 and 1882 and the Settled Land Act of 1882. Other legislation enacted during the 1880s led into the pre-Edwardian boom, but the financial benefits reaped during this decade were limited by the incursions made by the institution of higher death duties from 1894, and the pessimism that set in thereafter. The rise of the Orange Order to counter the agitations of the Land League ushered in the new century, along with the landlord-favourable terms of the Wyndham Act in 1903. But the act was repeatedly readjusted to provide a lessening benefit for the landowner, and the post-Edwardian era brought greater financial, social, and political challenges in the form of the People's Budget of 1909 and the Home Rule Bill in 1912. The conflict of the 1910s dominated the political landscape of the next fifteen years, with war raging at home and abroad, dividing families, driving inflation, and permanently altering the face of the political map of Ireland.

The immense challenges faced by the landed classes of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Ulster have led scholars to see this period as one of inevitable decline, as the political and economic bases on which landed society was based were weakened and then dissolved. However, this thesis posits an alternate view: that rather than a period of decline, the fifty-five year period encompassed by this study actual marks a time of adaptation and change, during which Ulster's elite families transferred their power from the political to the cultural, taking advantage of changing social currents to grasp new forms of authority that would bolster their social relevance. This chapter will offer an overview of the political and financial context in which this adaptation occurred.

INFLUENCE IN POLITICS AND SOCIETY

During the nineteenth century, politics throughout the United Kingdom was dominated by the landed classes. Despite challenges to landed authority and the increased involvement of non-landed individuals in national governance in the last two decades of nineteenth century, the peers of Ulster continued to play an important part in national and international politics. Local politics offered an additional realm in which these families held power, regularly serving as Justices of the Peace and magistrates within their home counties. Aristocratic influence was not only political, however: both the role of the aristocracy as diplomats within the Empire and abroad, their close connections of service and friendship with the monarchy, and their positions of authority within the military solidified their power within late nineteenth and early twentieth century society.

Representation in the House of Commons was crucial to securing and continuing a family's interest; ten out of these twelve families returned at least one Member of Parliament during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.² Primarily, those Ulster aristocrats who held seats in the House of Commons represented their own province, if not their exact locality. At the beginning of this study, the aristocracy of Ulster was represented in the Commons by Hugh Annesley (later 5th earl Annesley), MP for County Cavan (1857-1874) and John Crichton (later 4th earl Erne) MP for Enniskillen (1868-1880). They were joined in Parliament the next year by John Leslie, MP for County Monaghan (1871-1880), and Francis Needham (later 3rd earl of Kilmorey), MP for Newry (1871-1874). In 1878 Charles Stewart (later 6th marquess of Londonderry) was elected as MP for County Down (1878-1884). In 1880 John Crichton moved his seat to County Fermanagh (1880-1885), and was replaced in the Enniskillen constituency by his brother-in-law, Lowry Cole (later 4th earl of Enniskillen), who served until 1885. In 1885 Lord Ernest Hamilton entered Parliament as MP for North Tyrone (1885-1892), and was replaced in this seat by his brother, Lord Frederick, who served as MP for North Tyrone from 1892-1895. Five years later, their nephew, James Hamilton (later 3rd duke of Abercorn), was elected as representative for Londonderry City (1900-1913).

Because of the wide range of British and Irish connections held by these families, some Irish aristocrats alternately represented English or Scottish, rather than Irish, constituencies.

² The exceptions are the Belmore and the Rossmore families, who were active in local government (and for the Belmores, international diplomacy), but who did not serve within the House of Commons. The 4th earl of Belmore sat in the House of Lords as Representative Peer for Ireland.

Lord George Hamilton, son of the 1st duke of Abercorn, for example, served as an MP for nearly forty years, but never held an Ulster seat, instead serving as MP for Middlesex (1868-1885) and Ealing (1885-1906). His brothers, Lords Claud, Frederick, and Ernest Hamilton, on the other hand, all held an Ulster seat during part of their Parliamentary careers, although Claud and Frederick also each represented at least one English seat.

The aristocrats of Ulster who went into Parliament were usually the heirs of each family, and after their inheritance and subsequent relinquishment of their seat, many of these men continued to serve in the House of Lords. The 4th and 5th earls Annesley, 4th earl of Belmore, 4th earl of Caledon, 3rd earl of Erne, and 3rd earl of Kilmorey all held the office of Representative Peer [Ireland] during this period, continuing the representation of these families within Parliament well into the twentieth century. Other families held British or United Kingdom peerages, and men like the dukes of Abercorn and the marquesses of Londonderry sat in the House of Lords on these terms, thereby securing their influence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³

Locally, the aristocracy was highly involved in the administration of the county, dominating positions such as Lieutenant of the County and Deputy Lieutenant, and exercising authority in the area through their role as High Sheriffs, magistrates, and Justices of the Peace. Younger sons (and sometimes the heads of families) also held these positions elsewhere in the United Kingdom, extending the influence of these families into counties where they held secondary properties or estate interests. This dominance of the local interest is demonstrated in the representation of these peers in the role of county Lord Lieutenant, although it must be recognised that by the 1910s the authority of this role was largely ceremonial.⁴ The 1st earl of Dartrey served as Lieutenant of County Monaghan continually from 1871 to 1887, and was succeeded by Lord Rossmore, who served from 1887 to 1921, and then by Sir John Leslie from 1921 to 1922, completing a fifty-year dominance of county administration by these elite families. Primarily, peers tended to fill these roles in the counties in which they resided, leading these peers to dominate the representation of Tyrone (Belmore, 1892-1931; Abercorn, 1917-1945), Fermanagh (Erne, 1840-1885, 1885-1914), Down (Dufferin, 1864-1902, Londonderry, 1902-1915, 1915-1949), and Monaghan (Dartrey,

³ Alvin Jackson, *The Ulster Party: Irish Unionists in the House of Commons, 1884-1911* (Oxford, 1989)

⁴ David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life, 1913-1921: Provincial Experience of War and Revolution* (London, 1977), p.55

1871-1887; Rossmore, 1887-1921; Leslie, 1921-2). However, where landlords also held extensive properties elsewhere in Ulster, they might alternately serve as Lieutenant in those counties, as the 1st and 2nd dukes of Abercorn did in Donegal (1844-1885, 1885-1913).

The role of Deputy Lieutenant was also influenced by the geography of estate ownership, but somewhat less so than the principal county role. The role in Tyrone was dominated by the leadership of the earls of Caledon, while County Down was under the influence of Deputy Lieutenants from the Belmore, Annesley, Dufferin, and Kilmorey families. The Belmores also served in this role in County Fermanagh, as did the earls of Enniskillen and Erne. Peter Westenra, brother of the 5th Lord Rossmore, served as Deputy Lieutenant in County Monaghan. The massive Abercorn estates in Donegal offered that family influence in the northwest, while the 3,000 acres held by the Earl of Kilmorey in County Armagh gave the 3rd earl a foothold there.

W.E. Vaughan has recognised that the role of Justice of the Peace is a clear indicator of the established elite within a county, and unsurprisingly, most of the peers under examination held this role, as well as additionally serving within county governance as High Sheriff of their county, or as local magistrates.⁵ According to David Fitzpatrick, by the early twentieth century, the Commission of the Peace was the only influential role which landed Protestants retained in Ireland,⁶ although this was more marked in southern counties than in Ulster. Again, geography was a determining factor for this representation, and the clusters of aristocratic demesnes are reflected in the involvement of the peers of Ulster in local government in specific counties, primarily Down, Fermanagh, Monaghan, and Tyrone.

Table 1.2: Family representation by county in local government roles (Justice of the Peace, High Sheriff), 1870-1925

Down	Fermanagh	Monaghan	Tyrone
Annesley	Belmore	Dartrey	Belmore
Dufferin	Enniskillen	Leslie	
Kilmorey		Rossmore	

Source: Burke's Peerage, Baronetage and Knightage (London, 1900); Burke's Irish Family Records (London, 1976)

⁵ W.E. Vaughan, *Landlords and Tenants in Mid-Victorian Ireland* (Oxford, 1994), p.6

⁶ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p.55

It was not only political power that gave the aristocracy of Ulster influence: their social relationships and high status also granted them access to channels of power that were closed even to many elite families. Access to the society of the Royal Family was one of these channels. For Hugh, 4th earl Annesley, the Queen symbolised the relative stability of his earlier years when compared with the changes wrought in aristocratic society by the turn of the twentieth century. At her death in 1901, the Annesley family were sailing off the southern coast of Italy. According to Lady Mabel Annesley,

a small British tramp crept from the harbour, and my father put up his telescope to look at her. After a long silence he shut his telescope with a snap: 'The ensign is half-masted. The Queen is dead.' The long reign of Victoria was over. And, had we but known it, a whole epoch was over.⁷

The frequent residence of Queen Victoria at Osborne, on the Isle of Wight, gave the aristocracy increased access to the monarch during Cowes Week, where the young Annesley children were used to seeing her driving in a landau, swathed in veils and covered by a 'mushroom hat'.⁸

The friendly relationship between the monarchy and the aristocracy sometimes led to influence in other fields, as was the case for Lord Dufferin, who served as lord-in-waiting to Queen Victoria in the 1850s before progressing to become one of the premier diplomats of the nineteenth century. His activity and success as Governor General of Canada led to further roles as ambassador to Russia and to the Ottoman Empire in the 1870s and early 1880s, followed by his crowning achievement as Viceroy of India in 1884, and a return to Europe for ambassadorial posts in Rome (1888-1892) and Paris (1892-1896). Other members of Ulster's elite held similarly exalted diplomatic and foreign positions, including the 4th earl of Belmore, Governor of New South Wales from 1868 to 1872. The 1st duke of Abercorn held the office of Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland between 1874 and 1876, as did the 6th marquess of Londonderry, who was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in 1886.⁹

There was even some level of informality in the contact between these aristocratic families and the royal family, engendered by long friendships and regular professional meetings. Visits to and from the royal family filled the letters of Agnes Gladstone to her cousin, the countess of Belmore, demonstrating that the political and diplomatic connections

⁷ Lady Mabel Annesley, *As the Sight is Bent* edited by Constance Malleson (London, 1964), p.81

⁸ *ibid.*, p.81

⁹ Daisy, countess of Fingall, *Seventy Years Young* (London, 1937), p.162

of these families coloured even day-to-day life within these families. Agnes Gladstone's discussions of meetings with the Queen, Princess Alexandra, and other members of the royal family were relayed in terms very similar to those used for other families of her acquaintance: Agnes relished meeting the young princes and princesses, remarking on the excitable manners of the children of the Prince and Princess of Wales and the 'grand' looks of Princess Alice's daughters in 1868,¹⁰ as well as discussing the wedding gifts and upcoming nuptials of Princess Louise.¹¹

Aristocratic children were also expected to engage in this very grand form of family visiting, although the level of contact depended in large part on the status of their parents, as is expressed in an epistolary account of a nerve-racking visit paid to Queen Victoria at Osborne. As the children of one of Britain's premier diplomats, the Ladies Hermione and Victoria Blackwood were formally introduced to the Queen, but a nervous governess had instilled her fears in the two children, instructing them to 'curtsey to all the ladies for fear of making a mistake and not curtseying to the right ones.' According to Hermione Blackwood, meeting the Queen was 'dreadful and I was so glad when it was over,' though she had the capacity to find the experience amusing afterward. With a child's diplomacy, she described Her Majesty as 'very short, very fat, and not at all pretty.'¹²

Social chronicler J.H.S. Escott recognised, however, that the Prince of Wales was the actual social ruler from the 1880s onward, and in both official and unofficial terms it was from the future Edward VII that Society increasingly took its guidance.¹³ A selection of the aristocrats of Ulster were among those who counted Prince Albert Edward within their intimate circle, including the 2nd duke and duchess of Abercorn, who extended their relationship with the Prince of Wales even beyond the twenty years (1866-1885) the duke

¹⁰ PRONI, Belmore Papers, D/3007/I/4. Agnes Gladstone to Lady Belmore, 13 June 1868, 30 July 1868, Hawarden Castle

¹¹ PRONI, Belmore Papers, D/3007/I/4. Agnes Gladstone to Lady Belmore, 13 June 1868, 30 July 1868, Hawarden Castle ; PRONI, Belmore Papers, D/3007/I/4. Agnes Gladstone to Lady Belmore, 23 February 1871, 11 Carlton House Terrace. See also: Devon McHugh, "'Irish peers are deservedly unpopular": dealing with your father's *faux pas* within the nineteenth-century family' in Mary E. Daly and K. Theodore Hoppen (ed.), *Gladstone: Ireland and Beyond* (Dublin, 2011)

¹² PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/L/5/4. From Lady Hermione Blackwood to Lady Helen Blackwood, n.d. (c.1879)

¹³ J.H.S. Escott, *Society in London, By a Foreign Resident* (London, 1886), pp.13,16. Albert Edward, Prince of Wales and later Edward VII, supervised the official Royal Drawing Rooms and Court Presentation from the 1880s onward, covering these official duties during his mother's removal from the public eye.

served as Lord of the Bedchamber,¹⁴ and the 6th marquess and marchioness of Londonderry, who entertained members of the royal family regularly both in London and in the countryside, as well as being in regular attendance at the royal residences.¹⁵ The 3rd earl and countess of Kilmorey had a similarly close relationship with the Prince of Wales, and Lady Kilmorey joined the Marchioness of Londonderry in what was referred to by the press as ‘The King’s Loose Box’ at the Coronation in August 1902.¹⁶

These families were a part of a set of fewer than fifty individuals who were considered the intimates of the Prince of Wales from the 1880s onwards.¹⁷ While the involvement of the Prince of Wales in the scandal over the affair of the Marquess of Blandford and Lady Aylesford proscribed the contact of the Leslie and Churchills with the Prince in the 1880s, by the 1900s they were also among those who were friendly with the King, as well as other members of the Royal Family, including the Duke of Connaught.¹⁸ Lady Leonie Leslie (née Jerome) was among those who waited with Alice Keppel, the King’s mistress, to hear updates on his health in May 1910.¹⁹ Peers like the Londonderrys remained popular with the royals in the next generation, as well, partly due to the particular skills of Theresa Marchioness of Londonderry, at hosting and arranging guest lists. Diane Urquhart has quoted a letter from Arthur Bigge to the Marchioness, in which Bigge reveals the fondness of Queen Mary for the Society on offer at Londonderry House: ‘The Queen says she knows you would ask a few interesting people of the sort she is not in the general way of meeting... and she could talk to them while the King plays bridge!’²⁰ For these families, political connections were often born of social ones.

An additional arena of influence for the aristocracy of Ulster remained the army. The officer class of the British Army remained dominated by the landed interest even after the reforms of the mid- and late nineteenth century. Within Ireland, the military tradition of the upper classes was well nurtured by the late nineteenth century, as generations of Anglo-Irish

¹⁴ PRONI, Abercorn Papers, D/623/A/327. Personal letters between the Prince of Wales and Princess Alexandra and the Marquis of Hamilton, c.1871

¹⁵ H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Londonderrys: A Family Portrait* (London, 1979), p.96

¹⁶ Hyde, *Londonderrys*, pp.96-98

¹⁷ Urquhart, *The Ladies of Londonderry: Women and Political Patronage* (London, 2007), p.82

¹⁸ Dooley, *The Decline of the Big House in Ireland* (Dublin, 2001), p.244

¹⁹ Leslie, *The Marlborough House Set* (London, 1973), p.305

²⁰ Urquhart, *The Ladies of Londonderry*, p.82. From PRONI, Theresa Londonderry Papers, D/2846/2/8/37. Arthur Bigge to Theresa, Marchioness of Londonderry, 4 Feb 1911

families had fed their sons into the British armed forces.²¹ Many families established a connection with a particular regiment or regiments over generations, and even small children became a part of this, as is evidenced in a 1914 letter from Viscount Crichton to his eldest son, John. ‘My darling Boy,’ Crichton wrote as he left for the front in Eastern France.

Thank you so much for your telegram, which I got safely tonight. I am just sending you this letter to wish you goodbye, as I go off tomorrow morning. Someday you will be in the Blues like Daddy, won’t you and then you may have to go and fight too. Much love from your devoted Daddy.²²

John was aged six at the time, and the expectation was that he would eventually join the military. In the mid-twentieth century Nora Robertson, the daughter of an Army General, remembered the intrinsic tie between the social class of a certain family and their involvement with a particular sector of the military: the most prestigious regiments, the Guards, the Hussars, and the Navy were associated for her with the sons of ‘titled lieutenants, High Sheriffs, and Knights of St. Patrick’ who made up their officer’s corps.²³ Below this, the military associations followed a descending pattern of exclusivity and expense. The military tradition was a key feature of the childhood and school experience, manifested through such pursuits as the Eton Volunteer Corps, and more subtly, through the promotion of martial family legacies and collective attitudes of service and duty.²⁴ Within the Armed Forces, the aristocracy retained this arena of influence throughout this period. The basis of the connection between the aristocracy and the military existed in their feudal roots, and had been encouraged through centuries of involvement, particularly of younger sons, with the British Armed Forces. The positions of authority held by aristocrats within the Army, Navy, and later, Air Force, replicated some of the authority which was eroded during this time in the countryside.

²¹ Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffrey, ‘An Irish Military Tradition?’ in Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffrey (eds.), *A Military History of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1996), p.7

²² PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1939/21/16. Viscount Crichton to his eldest son, John, 15 August 1914

²³ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p.52; Nora Robertson, *Crowned Harp: Memories of the Last Years of the Crown in Ireland* (Dublin, 1960)

²⁴ PRONI, Enniskillen Papers, D/1702/11/6. Photo Album, 1899-1902

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES, 1870-1925

This period has traditionally been viewed as one of decline for the landed elite in Ireland, one during which an entire class was stripped of their political powers, economic strength, and social relevance. While it is true that during the years between Gladstone's first Land Act in 1870 and the confirmation of the boundary of Northern Ireland in 1925 the political and economic geography of the province of Ulster was redefined, for the families under examination in this case study, this was actually a period of adaptation and transition, rather than a decline. The aristocracy of Ulster was active in determining in their own fate, and rather than having the consequences of late nineteenth and early twentieth century change thrust upon them, they acted to preserve and alter their way of life in such a way that they were able to continue it well into the twentieth century. The 1860s ended with the confidence that had primarily characterised Ascendancy finance in the previous two centuries. While the 1870s have been viewed in retrospect as the last decade of landed confidence, events during this time suggest that the transitional period of the 1880s to 1910s was already underway. The implementation of the Land Act of 1870 under William Gladstone would mark the symbolic beginning of a fifty-five year wholesale transfer of Irish land from the hands of the elite to the hands of the tenants, a transfer which was instrumental in the alteration and adaptation of the fortunes and culture of Ulster's aristocratic families.

Intended to offer stability to tenants and to readjust the balance of Irish property rights, Gladstone's first Land Act actually ushered in the agrarian discontent and landed resentment that would characterize the next two decades, and the dissatisfaction of the tenantry became apparent within the next few years.²⁵ The 1870 Act, while it gave some security to tenants who had previously had none by enshrining local customs as law, offering compensation for improvements or eviction, and offering partial loans for tenants prepared to buy their land, was inherently conservative; the change in the law did nothing to actually change the position, either financial or social, of the Irish tenant farmer. Neither did the law clarify a centralised concept of 'Ulster Custom', a reflection of the contemporary view of more

²⁵ Paul Bew and Frank Wright, 'The Agrarian Opposition in Ulster Politics, 1848-87' in Samuel Clark and James S. Donnelly, Jr. (eds.), *Irish Peasants: Violence and Political Unrest, 1780-1914* (Dublin, 1983), p.205; Lindsay J. Proudfoot, *Urban Patronage and Social Authority: The Management of the Duke of Devonshire's Towns in Ireland, 1764-1891* (Washington, D.C., 1995), p.323; Olwen Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland: Land, Power and Social Elites, 1878-1960* (Dublin, 2009), p.34

equitable property management in the northern province, which was ostensibly the right of the tenant after the Act.²⁶ The symbolic nature of the Act was significant, however, alienating landlords who felt attacked by the principles underpinning the Act, and discontenting the peasantry with the Act's restricted measures. Despite the limited nature of the 1870 Act, the heads of some of Ulster's aristocratic families showed a remarkable, though pessimistic, ability to anticipate the future of landownership in the country. Within three years of the passing of Land Act in 1870, the 1st duke of Abercorn predicted that eventually landlords would be under pressure to relinquish their estates in their entirety.²⁷ Shortly thereafter, Lord Dufferin began to sell the majority of his land in County Down, primarily to John Mulholland, later 1st Baron Dunleath. Between 1874 and 1880 he raised £370,042, most of which went to pay debts, many of which were actually due to Mulholland.²⁸

Dufferin had begun to sell at a good time: long-term agricultural depression set in during 1877, destabilising the finances of the landed and agrarian classes across Britain, and acting as a catalyst for the rural and political agitation of the 1880s.²⁹ The causes and results of the agricultural depression have been widely researched and analysed by historians in the works of W.E. Vaughan, J.S. Donnelly, B.L. Solow, and Philip Bull,³⁰ and therefore will only be very briefly summarised here. In short, a very wet season across Ireland in 1877 kept many farmers from preparing the ground or harvesting their crops, and although the weather improved enough for a partial recovery in 1878, the next year was miserably wet and cold, thereby exacerbating an already dismal agricultural outturn. The timing of this meteorological disaster coincided with an increase in the production of American beef and grain, allowing the imported produce entry into the British and Irish market, thereby fundamentally eroding the base for Irish agriculture during these years. Within Ulster itself,

²⁶ R.W. Kirkpatrick, 'The Origin and Development of the Land War in Mid-Ulster', in F.S.L. Lyons and R. Hawkins (eds.), *Varieties of Tension: Ireland under the Union: Essays in Honour of T.W. Moody* (Oxford, 1980), p.203; T. Jones Hughes, 'Landholding and settlement in the counties of Meath and Cavan in the nineteenth century', in Patrick O'Flanagan, Paul Ferguson, and Kevin Whelan, *Rural Ireland, 1600-1900: Modernisation and Change* (Cork, 1987), p.116

²⁷ PRONI, Montgomery Papers, D/627/428/1. Duke of Abercorn to Hugh de Fellenberg Montgomery, 23 December 1873

²⁸ David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (London, 1992), pp.57,128

²⁹ Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, p.57; Terence Dooley, *The Decline of the Big House in Ireland* (Dublin, 2001), p.78

³⁰ Philip Bull, *Land, Politics and Nationalism: A Study of the Irish Land Question* (Dublin, 1996); J.S. Donnelly, *Landlords and tenants in Nineteenth Century Ireland* (Dublin, 1973); B.L. Solow, *The Land Question and the Irish Economy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971); Vaughan, W.E., *Landlords and Tenants in Ireland, 1848-1904* (Dublin, 1984)

the effects of this varied: according to Frank Thompson, some parts of the north were less severely affected by the vagaries of weather and market, and therefore survived the depression better, but overall the decline in crop yields for Ulster between 1876 and 1879 was higher than for Ireland as a whole.³¹ The lowland areas around the lakes in the south and west of the province experienced large-scale flooding. By the early 1880s the effects of American competition were being felt across the country. ‘On all sides the impression is that American competition is only in its infancy and must keep prices at an unremunerative range in the future,’ Lord Dufferin wrote to his agent in 1881. ‘This one idea...has driven all natural feelings of hope from the minds of the farming classes.’ The tenants were, he claimed, ‘exceedingly despondent.’³²

The falling rents and growing arrears experienced by the landowners of Ulster during the agricultural depression of the late 1870s were related to, and further encouraged, a larger decline in the value of land, thereby dwindling the fortunes of the elite, some of which were already on precarious footing due to high costs and pre-existing debts. While at no point until the 1920s were landlords required to sell their land to their tenants, according to Terence Dooley the early 1880s marked the beginning of pressure on landlords to transfer their acres to the tenantry.³³ The pressures were not primarily governmental, although the changes in legislation after 1885 did actively encourage sales; the demands on landlords was much stronger from the agrarian movement, from mortgage holders and those intent on collecting debts, and from within families, to whom estate holders had myriad financial obligations. By the mid-1880s Lord George Hamilton was urging his brother, the 2nd duke of Abercorn, to sell his land. ‘Nothing in my mind can save Irish landlords ultimately,’ he wrote in 1886. ‘Sell out now before made to.’³⁴

The rise in agrarian disturbance in Ulster began in the early 1880s. While the tie between Home Rule, Catholicism, and the Land League had limited the influence of the Land

³¹ Frank Thompson, *The End of Liberal Ulster: Land Agitation and Land Reform, 1868-1886* (Belfast, 2001), p.172

³² PRONI, Dufferin Papers, D/1071/A/K/IC/3/1. Howe to Dufferin, 31 January 1881

³³ Dooley, *The Decline of the Big House*, p.79

³⁴ Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, pp.70, 78; PRONI, Abercorn Papers, D/623/A/331/21. Lord George Hamilton to 2nd duke of Abercorn, 27 December 1886. Caroline Windrum, “The Decline of Landed Estates in Co. Tyrone, c. 1860-1920” (Cambridge, PhD, 1994), p.40

League, as well as of the Plan of Campaign, in the province,³⁵ agricultural depression forced economic necessity to become a priority over other loyalties, for both landlord and tenant. The intentionally ambiguous language of the Land League in Ulster allowed many Protestant farmers to ignore the nationalist rhetoric used in other parts of the country, and to join the tenant agitation.³⁶ In November of 1880 Lady Dartrey was writing to keep Lord Dufferin, serving away from his estates as Governor General of Canada, informed of ‘the evil spirit... spreading into the North.’ On a neighbouring estate the entire tenantry had refused to pay any rent.³⁷ Lord Dufferin remained in close contact with his agent over these matters, and was still keen to sell his estates, if the tenants were willing to buy their farms.³⁸ Elsewhere, landlords felt that it was not only their income that was vulnerable. After receiving anonymous menacing letters, Hugh, 5th earl Annesley, installed a night guard at Castlewellan, and insisted on corresponding with his agent in code.³⁹

Many members of Ulster’s aristocracy turned to the Orange Order to deal with the agitation during this time, primarily as a reaction against the Land League, characterized by the Earl of Enniskillen as ‘essentially a disloyal organisation...the ultimate separation of the two countries is its aim.’⁴⁰ As Jackson has recognised, many of Ulster’s landowners chose the late 1870s and early 1880s to either join the Orange Order or to renew their membership, suggesting that for those landlords with estates in south Ulster, the threat from the Land League was particularly intense.⁴¹ Colonel Edward Saunderson of County Cavan, leader of the Ulster Unionists and Grand Master of the Orange Lodge, called the Orange Order ‘the only organisation capable of dealing with the conditions of anarchy and rebellion.’⁴² Saunderson’s discomfort with some aspects of non-landed Protestant Unionism is inherent in this statement, and this reflects an attitude he shared with many of his landed brethren in Ulster.⁴³ But his statement also makes it clear that for the landowners, the Orange Order appeared to be the last resort, while scholars like David Hempton and Myrtle Hill have also

³⁵ Laurence M. Geary, *The Plan of Campaign, 1886-1891* (Cork, 1986), p.3; Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, p.40

³⁶ Alvin Jackson, *Colonel Edward Saunderson: Land and Loyalty in Victorian Ireland* (Oxford, 1995), pp.46-47

³⁷ PRONI, Dufferin Papers, D/1071/H/B/D/78/91. Lady Dartrey to Lord Dufferin, 4 November 1880

³⁸ PRONI, Dufferin Papers, D/1071/A/K/IC/3/2. Lord Dufferin to Howe, 14 October 1881

³⁹ Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, p.46

⁴⁰ Bew and Wright, “Agrarian Opposition”, p.221

⁴¹ Jackson, *Colonel Edward Saunderson*, p.47

⁴² Reginald Lucas, *Colonel Saunderson, MP: A Memoir* (London, 1908), p.66

⁴³ Jackson, *The Ulster Party*, p.16

recognised in the Orange Order of the 1880s and 1890s ‘an old paternalist, aristocratic, and crypto-militarist tradition’ which appealed to the aristocracy of Ulster at the deepest level.⁴⁴

Those landowners with estates in areas with more significant Catholic populations followed Saunderson’s lead in allying themselves with the Order in the last years of the nineteenth century. Viscounts Castlereagh and Crichton were among those who assumed a higher profile in the Order during these years, while the 5th Lord Rossmore’s risky loyalist march at the head of the Fermanagh Orangemen and forceful rhetoric at the Rosslea meeting in October 1883 briefly became a scandal and rallying point for the Unionist cause.⁴⁵ The Leslie, Dartreys, and Rossmores, families with estates that would eventually become a part of the Irish Free State, all took part in the Orange Order’s activities. According to Terence Dooley, these families used this opportunity to ‘re-establish themselves as the leaders of a Protestant tenantry’, capitalising on the disquiet felt by Protestant tenant farmers at the association of the Land League with Home Rule.⁴⁶ The rise of elite involvement in the Orange Order in the 1890s is reflective of an attitude of pessimistic inevitability that would rise among Ulster’s landlord class in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

The disturbances in Ireland’s rural areas between 1879 and 1881 could not be ignored, and the government responded with a new Land Act.⁴⁷ The Second Irish Land Act of 1881 did a good deal to temporarily quell disturbances in Ulster, at least among the Protestant farmers of the province, who no longer had any impetus to deal with the nationalist Land League after they were granted tenant right.⁴⁸ The short-lived cooperation between Ulster’s Protestant farmers and the Land League was eroded by both politics and religion: in 1887, the *Londonderry Standard* likened the embrasure of the nationalist policies of the Land League to trading one form of slavery (under landlordism) for another. ‘The object of Irish nationalists,’ the paper claimed, ‘is to extinguish the right of the minority to any representation whatever, whether municipal or parliamentary.’⁴⁹ The compromises of the 1881 Act combined with the increasingly obvious tie between Catholicism, Home Rule, and

⁴⁴ David Hempton and Myrtle Hill, *Evangelical Protestantism in Ulster Society, 1740-1890* (London, 1992), p.170

⁴⁵ J. Wallace Taylor, *The Rossmore Incident* (Dublin, 1884)

⁴⁶ Dooley, *The Decline of the Big House*, p.221

⁴⁷ Proudfoot, *Urban Patronage and Social Authority*, p.322

⁴⁸ R.V. Comerford, ‘The Politics of Distress, 1877-1882’ in Vaughan, *A New History of Ireland VI*, pp.42,47; Jackson, *Colonel Edward Saunderson*, p.48; Jackson, *The Ulster Party*, p.19

⁴⁹ Bew and Wright, “Agrarian Opposition”, p.227, quoting *Londonderry Standard*, 31 October 1887

the Land League to alienate many Ulster Protestant landholders from the organisation. The primary principle of the Act which helped quell rebellion in Ulster was the alteration of the actual form of ownership of tenant-held farms: the legislations established a principle of shared ownership between landlord and tenant, and conceding the 'Three Fs' of fair rent, free sale, and fixity of tenure. In addition, the Act created the Land Commission, a body with the power to lower and fix rents for fifteen years, and the Land Court to arbitrate tenant-landlord disputes.⁵⁰ This Act offered the security that tenants had expected from the earlier legislation. There were, however, problems with the Act, as revolutionary as the upset of sole landlord tenure was. The mechanisms of the new Land Act, while offering loans to assist tenants with the purchase of their holdings, did not actually offer any real incentive for sale to the landlords, while the new rents set by the land commission were so low that 'it remained cheaper, or just as secure, to rent.'⁵¹ Additionally, the Land Commission required all tenants to pay their outstanding rent before they could approach the Court for a future reduction: some farmers were actually too deeply in debt to do this, thereby leaving those who needed a rent reduction most unable to sue for it.⁵² These problems would be addressed in future Acts, not always to the benefit of the landlord.

The introduction of the land courts to adjudicate rent levels on Irish estates and the 1882 Arrears of Rent Act was meant to ameliorate this situation, but only served to increase landlord resentment and feelings of powerlessness. The 1882 Act, which came out of the Kilmainham Treaty, empowered the Land Commission to cancel rental arrears on properties valued at less than thirty pounds, writing off an estimated two million pounds across Ireland's estates.⁵³ The tenant was responsible for only one year of rent on their property, while the government would pay half the entire balance; the landlords were expected to take the rest of the arrears as a loss.⁵⁴ The amendment appeared to the landlords as a form of confiscation, increasing landlord frustration with what was seen as heavy-handed

⁵⁰ D.J. Hickey and J.E. Doherty, *A New Dictionary of Irish History from 1800* (Dublin, 2005), p. 287; R.V. Comerford, 'The Politics of Distress, 1877-1882' in W.E. Vaughan (ed.), *A New History of Ireland VI, 1870-1921* (Oxford, 1996), p.47; Lindsay J. Proudfoot, *Urban Patronage and Social Authority: The Management of the Duke of Devonshire's Towns in Ireland, 1764-1891* (Washington, D.C. ,1995), p.323

⁵¹ Comerford, 'The Politics of Distress', p.47; Proudfoot, *Urban Patronage and Social Authority*, p.323

⁵² Comerford, 'The Politics of Distress', p.47

⁵³ Hickey and Doherty, *A New Dictionary of Irish History*, p. 287

⁵⁴ Comerford, 'The Politics of Distress', p.50

interference, and further decreasing confidence in landownership.⁵⁵ Levels of arrears on individual estates and the reaction of landlords to requests for rental abatements varied considerably, even among this sample. The arrears on the Caledon estate seem to have been substantial even before the depression, but between 1875 and 1880, they skyrocketed from 42% to 67%.⁵⁶ The earl of Erne granted immediate rent abatements, and was instrumental in the Lough Erne Drainage Scheme to prevent future flooding, a scheme in which the earl of Belmore was also involved.⁵⁷ Lord Dufferin, who had leased his estate on terms that had proved unpopular throughout the 1860s and 1870s,⁵⁸ was eager to keep tenants on-side as he was to offload his acreage, and gave his tenants a permanent 15% reduction on their rents in March 1882, only to have the same tenants seek further reductions with the Land Commission within a year. According to Purdue, this was reflective of a pattern across Ulster in the 1880s, resulting in Ulster having the highest number of tenants approaching the courts for rent reduction.⁵⁹

The legislation of the 1880s, increasingly seen as intrusive and heavy-handed by the landlords, was partly a reaction to the increased rural agitation and an effort by the government to stabilise the agrarian climate in Ireland. Dooley has characterised the Land Act of 1881 as more noteworthy in the way it disregarded landlord rights than in the way it fulfilled tenant expectations, although Purdue has recognised that it did make progress toward offering tenants a realistic means for purchasing their farms.⁶⁰ While the act may have increased elite anxiety about landownership and estate control,⁶¹ some Ulster landlords still encouraged land sale after 1881. The 4th earl of Belmore sold parts of his estate in the wake of the act, and continued to encourage both his neighbours to sell portions of their holdings, and the government to offer better terms for landlord sale, throughout the 1880s.⁶²

Additional legislation the next year would become crucial for the preservation of the aristocratic patrimony, and would have a remarkable effect on the material repositories of the elite home in the next two decades, as will be further discussed in this thesis. The Settled

⁵⁵ Dooley, *The Decline of the Big House*, p.96

⁵⁶ PRONI, Caledon Papers, D/2433/A/6/57, 62. Caledon Estate Rentals

⁵⁷ Jackson, *Colonel Edward Saunderson*, p.46; Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, p.44

⁵⁸ Bew and Wright, 'Agrarian Opposition', p.202

⁵⁹ Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, pp.50-1

⁶⁰ Dooley, *The Decline of the Big House*, p.103; Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, p.49

⁶¹ Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, p.50

⁶² PRONI, Belmore Papers, D/3007/O/1/86. Earl of Belmore, Memorandum on Irish Land Question [n.d.]

Land Act of 1882 acknowledged the limitations placed on elite families by encumbered estates, and vested greater power in the owners of these elite properties. The Act was intended to overturn the conventions of strict settlement that had directed the inheritance of elite estates in Britain and Ireland for hundreds of years: the tenant for life (in the case of these families, generally the title holder) was regarded by the Act 'as the person most interested in the welfare of the estate... he is to be trusted with the powers of an absolute owner.'⁶³ Through the provisions of sections 3 and 37, the Act provided the legal means, administered by trustees or by application to the Court, to allow the aristocracy both to sell their inherited lands, and to dispose of moveable collections in order to preserve the greater whole of their patrimonies.⁶⁴ In order to safeguard the future heirs of the property, a number of measures were put in place to avoid 'misappropriation' of the capital realised by sale: all money raised was required to be paid either to the Court (in Ireland, this was Her Majesty's High Court of Justice) or to the estate trustees, who were additionally charged with guarding against improvident investment.⁶⁵ Additionally, the sale of heirlooms and other moveable goods was limited by the requirement of a court order in order to make any sales. In this, the Court had 'absolute discretion', and 'will not...exercise it unless the sale will be advantageous to the remaindermen as well as the tenant for life.'⁶⁶ One of the crucial results of this legislation, considered by its creators as an 'enabling' act for Irish landlords to correspond with the 'protective' land acts for the tenants, was the opening up of the international markets for the sale of the treasures of these homes, including collections of art and antique furnishings. The Settled Land Act did not, however, allow for the sale of inhabited ancestral homes,⁶⁷ thereby both corresponding with the existing preferences of the elite for house over contents, and indirectly influencing the priorities of these families during the next thirty years. The provisions of the Act enabled, and therefore encouraged, the sacrifice of paintings, sculpture, furniture, and libraries for the preservation of architecture, and stimulated the market for collectibles both in the United Kingdom and abroad.

In 1885 the Ashbourne Land Act again changed the terms of land purchase in Ireland, allowing the tenant to borrow the full purchase price from the government at a lowered

⁶³ Aubrey St. John Clerke, *The Settled Land Act, 1882* (London, 1882), p.2

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p.5; Dooley, *The Decline of the Big House*, p.103; Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, p.109

⁶⁵ Clerke, *The Settled Land Act*, pp.2, 147

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, pp.6, 106

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p.6; Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, p.69

interest rate of 4%. B.L. Solow has written that the Ashbourne Act was ultimately more to the advantage of the tenant than the landlord,⁶⁸ which may have influenced the lukewarm embrace of the Act by some landlords, such as the earl of Belmore, who only sold two farms (one in County Tyrone, one in County Fermanagh) under the 1885 Act.⁶⁹ Despite this, the change in the legislation acted as an enormous stimulus to the purchase of farms across Ireland.⁷⁰ This clearly had an effect on some of Ulster's landlords: Sir John Leslie sold 1,350 acres under the Act, while the earl of Dartrey sold 2,200 acres (approximately 25%) of his Waterford estate under these terms.⁷¹ The 2nd duke of Abercorn sold a great deal more: by 1889 he had relinquished a total of nearly 23,000 acres in Tyrone and Donegal.⁷²

During the late 1880s and 1890s, the economy began to recover, and by the turn of the twentieth century, some confidence had been restored in the economic markets, if not in landed investment. The pre-Edwardian boom was accompanied by a series of abrupt social and political changes, however, and while the middle classes and farming interest benefited from the upturn in the market, not all members of the elite were able to recover from the turbulent years of the 1880s.⁷³ The wealthier members of the aristocracy, however, seem to have weathered the economic and political storms fairly well, especially in comparison to some of their less well-off neighbours. The majority of land sales during the 1880s had been on very small estates, where the profit margin was minimal and the effects of the agricultural depression and Land War had been most keenly felt.⁷⁴ While some landlords had chosen to sell land during the 1880s, most of the families in this sample retained their estates, often in their entirety, through the 1890s.

Land legislation continued throughout the period, introducing amendments to the existing purchase bills in 1887, 1888, 1891, and 1896. The 1891 Act advanced the purchase price to the seller in land stock, rather than cash, an unsatisfactory arrangement that was reversed five years later.⁷⁵ The marquess of Dufferin and Ava was one of many who found

⁶⁸ Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, p.70; Solow, *The Land Question*, p.188

⁶⁹ Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, p.72

⁷⁰ Proudfoot, *Urban Patronage and Social Authority*, p.322

⁷¹ Dooley, *Decline of the Big House*, p.106

⁷² Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, pp.70, 78; PRONI, Abercorn Papers, D/623/A/331/21. Lord George Hamilton to 2nd duke of Abercorn, 27 December 1886; Windrum, "The Decline of Landed Estates in Co. Tyrone", p.40

⁷³ Alvin Jackson, *Ireland, 1798-1998* (Oxford, 1999), p.171

⁷⁴ Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, p.72

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p.70

the 1891 Act disappointing, but also saw no reasonable alternatives. 'It will ruin hundreds and hundreds of people,' he is quoted as saying in his biography, 'and it will confiscate nearly half our income, but, on the whole, I think we shall be wise to accept it.'⁷⁶ Proudfoot has remarked that the Acts of the later 1880s and the 1890s brought little new legislation to the existing bills, and that the restrictions inserted in the bills made them progressively less attractive to tenants, although Purdue has disagreed, offering a verdict similar to that of Dufferin on the Acts of the 1890s, claiming that despite their shortcomings, these acts were 'the first successful attempts to get the machinery of land purchase moving forward.'⁷⁷ Certainly, some of Ulster's aristocracy took advantage of the terms on offer. The marquis of Londonderry sold 6,000 acres in County Down during this period, as well as relinquishing substantial portions of his estates in Counties Donegal and Londonderry.⁷⁸ Around the same time Hugh, 5th earl Annesley sold his entire County Cavan estate, which had been the only estate within this study subjected to the Plan of Campaign.⁷⁹ The earl of Enniskillen sold approximately 8,000 acres in Fermanagh.⁸⁰ By the turn of the twentieth century, the earl of Belmore had sold almost 5,000 acres in county Tyrone.⁸¹

It was not only the changes in land legislation that altered the fortunes of the elite in Ulster during the 1890s, however. In 1894 William Harcourt, Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer, introduced a new budget in which the death duties on estates valued at over £1,000,000 were set at 8%.⁸² This would eventually have an enormous effect on some of the families in this sample, who through misfortunes of war and health were often subject to the payment of two sets of death duties contemporaneously: the Annesleys were paying two sets of concurrent death duties in the 1910s after the death of the 4th and 5th earls in 1906 and 1914, while the 3rd marquess of Dufferin suffered a similar fate, paying duties on the deaths

⁷⁶ Quoted in Alfred Lyall, *The Life of the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava* (London, 1905), II, p.235

⁷⁷ Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, p.71; Proudfoot, *Urban Patronage and Social Authority*, p.322

⁷⁸ Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, p.72,77

⁷⁹ Geary, *Plan of Campaign*, p.73; Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, p.77. Geary has noted that those estates that were subject to the Plan appear to have been carefully chosen, using financial vulnerability as the primary criterion for selection. When combined with the preferable conditions within Ulster, the financial stability and high incomes of the twelve families within this study may have contributed to their ability to withstand agrarian pressure during the 1880s. (Geary, *Plan of Campaign*, pp.5-51, 141)

⁸⁰ Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, p.72

⁸¹ Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, p. 73; Windrum, 'The decline of landed estates in County Tyrone'

⁸² Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, p.111

of his father, the 1st marquess in 1902, and his brother, the 2nd marquess, in 1918. For some families, like the Abercorns, careful planning and enormous wealth helped preserve much of their economic base, even in the face of heightened taxation. At the death of the 2nd duke in 1913 the family was able to relinquish a painting from their collection, garnering an additional £80,000 with which they were able to fund the tax bill.⁸³

By the end of the 1890s, some landlords, especially those who were struggling to remain financially stable, felt increasingly disconsolate about the future of Irish landownership. According to Proudfoot, for the landlords the land acts of the 1870s through 1890s worked to destroy their authority in the countryside more effectively than any past challenges to their hegemony.⁸⁴ Writing to Edward Carson in 1897, the marquess of Dufferin and Ava bemoaned the situation as ‘a mess’: ‘Every principle not only of justice, but of practical good sense, has been so thwarted by Mr. Gladstone’s blundering legislation, that the situation is irredeemable.’ Dufferin felt that while an enquiry into the land courts might point up the inconsistencies and excesses within the system, even this would not actually offer any security or improvement to the situation of the landlords.⁸⁵

The relative economic recovery of the 1890s as well as the profits from earlier land sales helped buoy the fortunes of the aristocracy of Ulster as they entered the twentieth century, and this favourable climate was furthered by alterations in the land legislation during the first years of the century. The Wyndham Act of 1903 offered landlords a cash bonus of 12% of the purchase price of their estates.⁸⁶ The bonus was the extra encouragement many landlords needed to sell, and the earl of Kilmorey wrote to George Wyndham personally to confirm that he understood the terms under which it was offered.⁸⁷ Wyndham had already been in contact with other Ulster peers, and is said to have intentionally ‘approached the problem from the landlords’ perspective’: in the wake of the Irish Landowners’ Convention in 1902, which formed the basis for the Act of the following year, he met with the 2nd duke of Abercorn and 7th marquess of Londonderry at Mountstewart, where they had reassured him

⁸³ PRONI, Abercorn Papers, D/623/B/2/138. Appointment of Trustees, 13 July 1914

⁸⁴ Proudfoot, *Urban Patronage and Social Authority*, p.322

⁸⁵ 1st marquess of Dufferin and Ava to Edward Carson, 24 April 1897, quoted in Patrick Buckland (ed.), *Irish Unionism, 1885-1923: A Documentary History*, p.48

⁸⁶ Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, p.80

⁸⁷ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/D/41/6/5. George Wyndham to earl of Kilmorey, 20 October 1904

that they were satisfied with the contents of the report.⁸⁸ While some peers, such as the marquess of Dufferin and Ava, were already trying to sell their estates in their entirety,⁸⁹ most used the terms of the Wyndham Act to secure a greater return on their tenanted land in order to invest the profits, and the terms of the Wyndham Act led to the largest transfer of land in Ireland.⁹⁰

The duke of Abercorn began selling property in Donegal and Tyrone again almost immediately in 1903,⁹¹ followed by the marquess of Londonderry, who sold approximately 4,000 acres in County Down.⁹² In Fermanagh, the earl of Erne was the first major landowner to relinquish his land under the terms of the act, selling more than 15,000 acres in Fermanagh (and an additional 7,000 acres in Counties Sligo and Donegal) for a return of more than £250,000.⁹³ The Act was intended to encourage the landlords to relinquish their properties, and the advice they received from their retainers demonstrates that the terms were appealing. 'Do not allow anyone to persuade you it is wrong to sell at such prices,'⁹⁴ the Kilmorey agent wrote to Lady Kilmorey in December of 1903, laying out the increased income the family would receive if the profits from the sale were properly invested. The Kilmoreys did not agree to sell immediately, but when they did sell more than 23,000 acres later in the decade, they realized a profit of nearly £150,000.⁹⁵

For some families, returns on the sale of estates were more successful than for others. Much of this depended on the pre-existing debt held by the family. Olwen Purdue has provided two contrasting examples of the results of sales of aristocratic families in this sample in the 1910s: the disappointing example of the sales of the 4th earl of Enniskillen, and the more successful example of the 5th earl of Caledon. In the mid-1910s the earl of Enniskillen sold just over 16,000 acres of his property, which raised £22,413 in cash and stock, as well as the £2,312 bonus promised under the Wyndham Act. However, costs and debt on the estate swiftly whittled the earl's profit to nearly nothing. £1,125 was deducted for sale fees. £1,595 went to the Ministry of Finance as payment for the Lough Erne Drainage

⁸⁸ Proudfoot, *Urban Patronage and Social Authority*, p.323; Jackson, *Colonel Edward Sanderson*, p.47

⁸⁹ PRONI, Dufferin Papers, D/1071/A/K/IC/3/2. Marquess of Dufferin to Howe, 4 July 1881

⁹⁰ Proudfoot, *Urban Patronage and Social Authority*, p.323

⁹¹ PRONI, Abercorn Papers, D/623/B/13. Land Purchase Papers for Abercorn Estate

⁹² Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, p.83

⁹³ *ibid.*, pp.83,100

⁹⁴ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/D/41/6. Hunter Moore to Lady Kilmorey, 30 December 1903

⁹⁵ Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, pp.83,100

Scheme. The remaining £19,643 went directly to the Alliance Assurance Company, with a further debt still owed. Other outstanding debts included £3,000 to the earl's nephew, Lord Crichton, and £5,000 to his sister, Lady Kathleen Villiers. The only income from the 16,000 acre sale seen by the earl of Enniskillen was the £2,312 bonus.⁹⁶

The result of the sale of property to tenants on the Caledon estates was very different: a massive sale by the 5th earl of Caledon of approximately 15,000 acres returned approximately £137,000 of Irish Guaranteed 3% Land Stock, as well as nearly £22,000 cash. The lower level of debt on the Caledon estate allowed the earl to convert the land stock into investments, which were spread in securities across the globe. Political and economic disturbances in the 1920s and 1930s affected some of the investments, but in general, losses made in one sector were balanced by gains made elsewhere.⁹⁷ This sort of cautious and varied investment pattern allowed the fortune made by the earl of Caledon under the Wyndham Act to survive the 1920s fairly intact.

The variable results of sales under the Wyndham Act have led to a similar variability in the treatment of the Act by scholars of the landowning class during this period. While historians like Mark Bence-Jones and Peter Somerville Large have viewed the Wyndham Act of 1903 as the final nail in the coffin of the elite patrimony in Ireland,⁹⁸ more recently the work of Olwen Purdue and Terence Dooley has demonstrated that in many ways the Wyndham Act actually served as the salvation of the landed classes in Ireland. According to Dooley, 'the huge capital sums received by landlords actually rejuvenated big house life,' but the investments made by the landowners of Ireland were later decimated by unexpected factors such as worldwide depression, renewed agrarian disturbances, and political shifts that targeted the fortunes of the elite.⁹⁹ 'An Irish estate is like a sponge,' Lord Dufferin wrote, 'and an Irish landlord is never so rich as when he is rid of his property.'¹⁰⁰ Land legislation allowed the aristocracy to liquidate their assets in order to stave off financial ruin, and many peers recognised this fact.

⁹⁶ Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, pp.83,101

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p.107

⁹⁸ Mark Bence-Jones, *The Twilight of the Ascendancy* (London, 1987); Peter Somerville Large, *The Irish Country House* (London, 1995)

⁹⁹ Dooley, *Decline of the Big House*, p.274

¹⁰⁰ R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London, 1988), p.377

The buoyant politico-economic conditions of the early 1900s did not last long for the landed classes of Ireland, and the end of the decade was to see changes that would challenge what economic security land sales under the Wyndham Act had provided. In 1909 the Birrell Act again altered the conditions of land sale and purchase, and the less favourable terms offered by the new legislation may have forced some landlords to sell their lands before the conditions of the new bill were implemented.¹⁰¹ Sentiment, claims Purdue, was no longer a match for the economic necessity felt by these families.¹⁰² In the same year, Chancellor David Lloyd George launched the People's Budget, which raised the income tax on the wealthiest members of society while making additional demands on unearned landed incomes.¹⁰³ As David Cannadine has stated, the landed rich were the People's Budget's 'principal target and victim.'¹⁰⁴ Under the new budget landed income was hit with a 20% tax, while income tax on estates was raised at all levels. Properties valued at between £20,000 and £50,000 were taxed at 5%, with a rise to 10% tax for estates valued between £50,000 and £1,000,000. Properties valued at over £1 million were required to pay a 15% tax.¹⁰⁵ The demand on the incomes of the landed elite was unprecedented.

The demands of the new legislation ate into the patrimonies of the elite, and it was this, not necessarily land sale, which limited the recovery many families were able to make during the economic boom that continued through the Great War. Despite this, the shape of the countryside in Ulster, and across Ireland, was changing; according to W.E. Vaughan, 'by 1914 three-quarters of occupants were buying out their landlords, mostly under the great acts of 1903 and 1904.'¹⁰⁶ This statistic is reflected to an extent on the estates of the twelve families in this case study: in general the peers of Ulster had sold between 50% and 75% of their estates by the 1910s. Across Ireland, the declaration of war in August 1914 temporarily halted land purchase,¹⁰⁷ although the rates of sale had been declining in Ulster since around 1911.

This may have been because the landlords of the northern counties of Ireland now had something else on their minds: the threat of Home Rule. Throughout the province, the Ulster

¹⁰¹ Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, p.83

¹⁰² *ibid.*, p.66

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, p.110

¹⁰⁴ Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, p.48

¹⁰⁵ Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, p.111

¹⁰⁶ Vaughan, *Landlords and Tenants in Ireland, 1848-1904*, p.39

¹⁰⁷ Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, p.81

Volunteer Force grew through the early 1910s, and Ulster's elite played a central role in this. Aristocratic families from across Ulster became involved in the UVF during the years leading up to the great war, leading regiments, offering their estates for drilling of local units, and speaking at rallies. The demesnes at Castle Coole, Castle Leslie, and Clandeboyne were used for the training camps of local battalions, while other homes, such as Dawson's Grove, were used for the storage of ammunition and weaponry.¹⁰⁸ The involvement with the Force was not limited solely to those peers with military experience: Theresa marchioness of Londonderry was involved in the purchase of the colours for the North Down regiment, and regularly wrote to Lady Leonie Leslie about UVF drilling, while even Lionel Leslie, who could not have been more than 14 at the time, was inducted by his father into the Monaghan Regiment.¹⁰⁹ The leadership of the landed classes was central to the organization of the UVF, and representative of the continued role Ulster's elite played in the organization of the province.

Some of the earliest, and most enthusiastic, involvement was of the Crichton family at Crom Castle. Drilling at Crom was being carried out as early as July 1912, while in the next year the Erne demesne was the location of the Fermanagh Regiment Camp of Instruction in November. By March of 1914 regiments were drilling at Crom on Tuesdays and Saturdays, with an additional shooting practise on Thursdays from early in the year. The driving force of this involvement seems to have been Major Viscount Crichton, grandson of the earl of Erne, who was a member of the Enniskillen Horse for the UVF, as well as a serving officer of the Royal Horse Guards. He regularly attended the drilling and rallies of other regiments, and spoke publicly to encourage his troops, remarking that 'If there were more bodies like the Enniskillen Horse throughout the Empire it would be a very good thing for it.'¹¹⁰

However, not all Ulster's peers demonstrated Major Viscount Crichton's eagerness for the activities of the UVF. The nature of the involvement of Lord Castlereagh, later the 7th marquess of Londonderry, cast doubt on his seriousness as a UVF commander, leading as he did no fewer than three regiments (one of which, the North Belfast, a force of more than 8,000 men) during a time in which he was rarely in Ulster, and was much distracted by his

¹⁰⁸ Timothy Bowman, *Carson's Army: The Ulster Volunteer Force, 1910-1922* (Manchester, 2007), pp.24, 105,120; Dooley, *Decline of the Big House*,p.224

¹⁰⁹ Bence Jones, *Irish Country House*, p.74; Bowman, *Carson's Army*, pp.55,121

¹¹⁰ Bowman, *Carson's Army*, pp.23,25,48,81,101

role as MP for Maidstone.¹¹¹ Castlereagh's equivocal involvement in the UVF may have been reflective of a wider unease with the UVF from within the elite: Shane Leslie later suggested that some members of the landed establishment, such as his father, Sir John Leslie, and Lord Farnham, only took command of their local regiments to retain order among the 'hot heads', while at Florence Court Lord Cole's diffident response to the local drilling provoked complaints from the local Unionist club.¹¹² These peers seem to have been the exception, though, and the UVF became a part of aristocratic daily life in the years leading up to the Great War. Both Dooley and Bowman have seen the enthusiasm for the UVF as natural for the time, but these scholars differ on the source of this zeal. According to Terence Dooley, this militant response to the threat to the Union was natural from the aristocracy: the Union was 'vital for the maintenance of their civil and religious liberties,' while Bowman has seen this passion as reflective of a wider military mentality in the social climate of the early twentieth century.¹¹³ The military arm of the movement was certainly reflective of the importance placed within aristocratic society in general on the defence of Ulster within the Union: members of every family in this study signed the Ulster Covenant in 1912, declaring their allegiance to the Union, and their willingness to fight to preserve it.¹¹⁴

The role of the international conflict that followed in 1914 to 1918 is an ambiguous one. The psychological effect of the Great War on the people of Britain, and on the aristocracy specifically, was immense. This is made clear in the rash of memoirs published in the wake of the conflict, many of which use August 1914 as the crux and climax of their narrative. The literary 'Golden Age' of the Edwardian years was reflected on by the elite across Britain as having been destroyed by the horrors of the conflict that followed; as Lady Leonie Leslie phrased it: 'The world I married into disappeared in 1914.'¹¹⁵ Edith 7th marchioness of Londonderry examined the situation more carefully in her memoirs. For Lady Londonderry, as for many of her contemporaries, the massive casualties suffered during the Great War were accompanied by the wholesale destruction of a way of life that was 'swept into oblivion in the holocaust that buried two generations of hapless young men, whose ideas

¹¹¹ *ibid.*, pp.7,47,53,97

¹¹² *ibid.*, p.48

¹¹³ Dooley, *Decline of the Big House*, p.224; Bowman, *Carson's Army*, p.67

¹¹⁴ PRONI, Ulster Covenant Search, <http://applications.proni.gov.uk/UlsterCovenant/Search.aspx>

¹¹⁵ Anita Leslie, *The Gilt and the Gingerbread: An Autobiography* (London, 1981), p.152

and manners perished with them.’¹¹⁶ These elegiac statements may be, however, a part of a longer-standing Anglo-Irish tradition. According to W.J. McCormack, the ‘Golden Age’ was a portable event for the Ascendancy, always falling as it did

before some moveable disaster, before the Union, before the Famine, before the Encumbered Estates Court, the Land War, Parnell, the Rising, the Troubles, an accelerating succession of unfortunate falls each one briefly inaugurating some (retrospectively acknowledged) idyll which is itself soon dissolved by the next disaster.¹¹⁷

In this vein, the publications that followed the war reflect the perception and memory, rather than the reality, of the years before 1914, especially those written by nostalgic aristocrats weathering the personal and collective hardships of the 1920s and 1930s.

In reality, the war was a symbolic, rather than an actual, break for these families, and many clans, such as the Londonderrys, continued to live exceptionally well for a further two decades, participating in politics, entertaining grandees and royalty, and living in grand homes across the United Kingdom. The actual physical effect, in terms of mortality, of the war on these families was significant, but the statistics do not live up to the melancholy picture of memory. The image presented in works like Elizabeth Bowen’s *The Last September* of tables littered with photographs of young, handsome men who had died in the service of their country is only a partial one: while many of the men who served during the Great War were young, those from the families within this study were actually less young than the national average (50% of the men enlisted from these twelve families were under the age of thirty, compared with 70% from the United Kingdom at large).¹¹⁸ The mortality rate from these families (approximately 25%) was much higher than the national average, which was about 1 in 8. However, when weighed against more specific averages, the death of approximately 1 in 4 of these serving peers is equal to the tragedy shared by the nation: in the carnage of the Western Front 1 in every 5 military men died, which was approximately the same as for recruits from the public schools. When compared to the peerage as a whole, the

¹¹⁶ Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, p.351

¹¹⁷ WJ McCormack, *Ascendancy and Tradition in Anglo-Irish Literary History from 1789 to 1939* (Oxford, 1985), p.13; J.M. Winter, ‘Britain’s “Lost Generation” of the First World War’, *Population Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 3, p.452

¹¹⁸ Elizabeth Bowen, *The Last September* (London, 1929), p.18; Winter, ‘Britain’s “Lost Generation”’, p.452

numbers are again roughly similar: 18.95% of peers who saw active service between 1914 and 1918 died.¹¹⁹

As David Cannadine has remarked, the result of the extended connections of the aristocracy was that many of these deaths were devastating for more than one family,¹²⁰ thereby multiplying the repercussions felt at each casualty. Additionally, the tendency of the patricians to connect their families to certain traditional regiments meant that in some instances they would lose more than one relation in a single military manoeuvre. For example, on 30th October 1914 Lady Evelyn Ward and Lady Mabel Grosvenor, daughters of the 4th Earl of Erne, both lost their husbands, who served together in the 1st Life Guards. The next day, their brother, Henry, Viscount Crichton, was also killed. The loss of so many lives during the war doubtless contributed to the climate of instability felt by the aristocracy during this time, but the changes and challenges brought to the fore during the war years were already in existence. While it is the years after 1914 that are generally associated with abrupt political and economic fluctuations, these changes were actually rooted, at least in part, in the previous decade.

Although the change in the tenure of landownership had altered significantly by the 1920s, all of the families in this study retained at least some tenanted land up to this period. This is partly due to their exceptionally large original holdings: the very wealthy peers of Northern Ireland weathered the changes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century better than many of their less well-off neighbours. However, Olwen Purdue has shown that the majority of landlords in her own sample of landowners, formed of Big House proprietors in the north east of Ireland with estates of 2,000 acres or more, also remained in possession of some tenanted land by 1921.¹²¹ In this, the aristocracy in this sample (and the transitional period they experienced during the period between 1870 and 1925) may be representative of their class as a whole, although their more fortunate circumstances in the mid- to late nineteenth century gave them a greater chance of survival into the twentieth.

For these families, the goal was the preservation of the land around their demesnes. Landowners like the Annesleys and the Ernes sold their estates in other counties, but retained those estates in their home counties: these estates not only offered continued income, but also

¹¹⁹ Winter, "Britain's "Lost Generation"", pp. 450,460,464

¹²⁰ Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, p.80

¹²¹ Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, p.87

provided the status that was still associated with landownership.¹²² Other families, such as the Enniskillens and the Belmores, chose to retain large portions of their estates across Ireland: though the 4th earl of Belmore had been one of the first landlords to sell under the Land Acts, by the 1920s his son, the 5th earl, still held more than 10,000 acres in 1921, a similar size to the land retained by the 4th earl of Enniskillen even after the sales of the early twentieth century. This situation changed after the passing of the 1925 Northern Ireland Land Act, which allowed landlords to retain their untenanted land for their own use, but required the sale of tenanted agricultural land. Other families retained untenanted land that they choose not to farm: even after the Hogan Act was passed in the Free State in 1923, Sir John Leslie remained in possession of at least 12,000 acres of the family's Lough Derg estate in County Donegal.¹²³

Table 1.3: Land sales on estates, 1885-1921

	Acreage in 1878	Acres sold after 1881	Acres sold after 1903	Acreage in 1921	Acreage after 1925
Kilmorey	43,960		23,150	20,810	15,900
Annesley	51,060		3,578	46,482	4,390
Abercorn	69,930	27,860	27,040	15,030	13,430
Caledon	32,110		15,330	16,780	8,780
Erne	31,389		18,847	12,542	12,500
Belmore	19,400	4,880	2,760	11,760	1,950
Enniskillen	30,204		16,300	10,340	
Londonderry	27,418*		4,000		

* *Irish Londonderry properties only*

Source: Bateman, Parliamentary Returns of Advances, ILC land purchase records, Land Commisision Papers.

The allowance of retention of land for agricultural use opened up the possibility of extended farming for families who were able to continue in possession of their untenanted land. Most estates only supported a moderate number of animals before the 1920s: records at Florence Court and Mourne Park from the 1910s are fairly representative for their time in showing that families who were not pursuing a programme of intensive breeding generally

¹²² *ibid.*, p.88

¹²³ Dooley, *The Decline of the Big House, in Ireland*, p.119

kept approximately fifteen horses for family and farm use, about thirty to forty pigs for home consumption, a flock of around 200 sheep, and from fifty to one hundred cattle.¹²⁴

Some peers were more interested in breeding programmes than others. The most comprehensive breeding programmes during this period were at Caledon, where the 4th earl bred prize shorthorn cattle, as well as sheep, pigs, and for a period in the 1880s and 1890s, some thoroughbred horses.¹²⁵ His contemporary, the 4th earl of Belmore, was similarly interested in progressive breeding, although the programme at Castle Coole was concentrated on the breeding of prize sheep,¹²⁶ while the barns and stabling for both cattle and pigs constructed at Crom Castle under the direction the 3rd earl Erne caught the eye of visitors there.¹²⁷ As the twentieth century dawned, however, other peers took over the mantle of breeding, and the estates with the strongest records of breeding fluctuated. By the late 1910s the interest in cattle breeding seems to have waned at Caledon under the 5th earl, and this is reflected in the decreased meticulousness of the records and in the declining numbers of the herds.¹²⁸ Elsewhere, at Dawson's Grove, Baronscourt, and Crom Castle, cattle breeding remained an important investment under the direction of the new heads of these families. Certainly the sloping terrain of south Ulster has been associated by historical geographers with cattle-farming, especially dairying.¹²⁹ Among this group of acquainted and inter-related peers there does seem to have existed a smaller coterie of aristocrats who shared an interest in programmes of breeding and investment, and who therefore were a part of this shared community. In particular, families like the Caledons, the Leslie's, and the Dartreys, whose estates were all located near each other in south Ulster, circulated animals for breeding in the early part of the twentieth century.¹³⁰

The purpose of these animals varied from estate to estate, but primarily, the cattle raised on the estates of the Ulster aristocracy were not bred for home consumption. While cattle were sold at markets in Glaslough, Armagh, and across Ireland, animals slaughtered for

¹²⁴ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/H/15/1. Mourne Park Livestock ledger, 1914-1919, 1931; PRONI, Enniskillen Papers, D/1702/6/11. Monthly Account of Livestock on Florence Court Demesne, 1909-1918

¹²⁵ PRONI, Caledon Papers, D/2433/A/8/10. Stock Book for Caledon Farm, 1885-1895

¹²⁶ PRONI, Belmore Papers, D/3007/I/3. Lord Belmore to Lady Belmore, n.d.

¹²⁷ PRONI, T/1282/2 pp.158-166. Diary of John Ynyr Burges of Parkanaur, Castlecaulfeild, Co. Tyrone, 25-27 November 1863

¹²⁸ PRONI, Caledon Papers, D/2433/A/8/13. Stock Book for Caledon Farm, 1907-1917

¹²⁹ Hughes, 'Landholding and settlement', pp.130

¹³⁰ PRONI, Caledon Papers, D/2433/A/8/18. Pedigrees for short-horn cattle, 1894-1908

beef were the exception. At Caledon, this only occurred a few times, usually at Christmas, when a bullock would be slaughtered to feed labourers.¹³¹ In fact, despite the presence of large herds of both dairy and beef cattle on their demesnes, most homes actually bought in almost all of the beef consumed in the house: the prize winning Caledon cattle were given more exalted destinies, and two were sold in 1878 to the Belgian Government.¹³² Ultimately, the cattle were there to turn a profit on their rearing and sale, not as a food source. Additionally, like the horses raised on the estates of Ulster, the cattle were treated on some demesnes rather like pets: at Baronscourt they were given fanciful names that emphasised their aristocratic Ulster background, such as Lady Mourne and Countess Tyrone.¹³³ The 3rd earl of Erne made a tour of the farmyard a part of the programme for his guests at Crom Castle, where John Burges remarked on the ‘Milch cows and beef cows, young bullocks and heifers in a splendid dining hall in all the comforts of cleanliness. Everything is done by machinery. The steam engine was hard at work and producing quickly an immense supply of food.’¹³⁴ It may have been the case that the cattle raised on these farms were both an important investment and, to some extent, pets: therefore, the consumption of these cattle would have been as off-putting as the consumption of a treasured hunter or a favourite gun dog.

The different intentions for the animals raised on various estates obviously affected the breeds most often used by the aristocracy, but the fairly regular use of dairy cattle for home use and meat cattle for showing purposes seems to have directed many of the landowners in Ulster toward a fairly consistent, though diverse, selection of breeds. Shorthorn Cattle were the prize-winners at a number of shows in which Ulster landlords participated, and they made up a large portion of the herds at Caledon, Crom, Dawson’s Grove, and Baronscourt. In the early twentieth century, there was also a move toward diversifying these herds: this is especially apparent in the records for the home farm at Caledon, where the single Highland heifer kept in 1904 was joined by an additional thirty Highland cattle by 1910.¹³⁵ At

¹³¹ PRONI, Caledon Papers, D/2433/A/8/9. Stock Book for Caledon Farm, 1873-1884

¹³² PRONI, Caledon Papers, D/2433/A/8/9. Stock Book for Caledon Farm, 1873-1884

¹³³ PRONI, Abercorn Papers, D/623/C/12/71. Baronscourt Private Herd Book, 1890-1915; PRONI, Abercorn Papers, D/623/C/12/72. Baronscourt Herd Book for Pedigree Stock, 1895-1918

¹³⁴ PRONI, T/1282/2 pp.158-166. Diary of John Ynyr Burges of Parkanaur, Castlecaulfield, Co. Tyrone, 25-27 November 1863

¹³⁵ PRONI, Caledon Papers, D/2433/A/8/21. Valuation of Farm Stock, 1904; PRONI, Caledon Papers, D/2433/A/8/13. Stock Book for Caledon Farm, 1907-1917

Castlewellan, Highland Cattle were kept as early as the 1890s.¹³⁶ At Crom, the Shorthorn Cattle were accompanied by an equal number of prize-winning animals of Ayrshire breed.¹³⁷ By diversifying their herds, improving landlords were able to take advantage of various types of terrain and parkland in order to graze their animals.

The method of raising sheep on the estates of the Ulster aristocracy seems to have been similar to that for the cattle, although the flocks were significantly more anonymous than many of the cattle herds. This may have been partly by choice: while, as has been discussed, the cattle on these estates were very rarely eaten by the family, this was not the case for the sheep, who were raised both for breeding competitions and investment, and as a source of meat for the family and staff. The breeding of prize sheep was a consuming hobby and interest for some of the aristocrats of Ulster, including the earls of Caledon and the 4th earl of Belmore, who corresponded with his wife in the 1870s about the nature of the prizes at the breed competitions.¹³⁸ At Caledon, the records show that the breeding of sheep gained increased importance through the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth, and the herds there, which consisted of a variety of breeds, including Leicester, Border, Black-faced, and Cheviot Sheep, continued to grow, with an increased emphasis on the Leicester White and Black-faced breeds during the first two decades of the twentieth century.¹³⁹ These animals were obviously being farmed for profit more intensively during this period: though the flock sizes were growing, approximately the same annual number of sheep (usually between 30 and 40 animals) was still consumed at the house.¹⁴⁰

On some estates a large number of pigs were also raised, and although at Crom Castle they too were given glamorous accommodations,¹⁴¹ their primary purpose seems to have been to provide meat for the estate, rather than to make a profit at market or garner prizes at shows. The aristocrats of Ulster did not seem to find themselves overcome by their dedication to raising pigs, as did some more legendary patrician farmers.¹⁴² At Caledon, the interest in a

¹³⁶ PRONI, Annesley Papers, T.3774/8. Photograph album, c. 1890s

¹³⁷ PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1939/29/38. List of prizes of Crom herd of cattle, 1910-1914

¹³⁸ PRONI, Belmore Papers, D/3007/I/3. Lord Belmore to Lady Belmore, n.d.

¹³⁹ PRONI, Caledon Papers, D/2433/A/8/21. Valuation of Farm Stock, 1904; PRONI, Caledon Papers, D/2433/A/8/13. Stock Book for Caledon Farm, 1907-1917

¹⁴⁰ PRONI, Caledon Papers, D/2433/A/8/9. Stock Book for Caledon Farm, 1873-1884

¹⁴¹ PRONI, T/1282/2 pp.158-166. Diary of John Ynyr Burges of Parkanaur, Castlecaulfield, Co. Tyrone, 25-27 November 1863

¹⁴² P.G. Wodehouse, *Blandings Castle* (London, 1935), and others, tales of the aristocratic Lord Emsworth and his prize sow, Empress of Blandings

diverse mixture of breeds which characterised the cattle and sheep is also in evidence for the pigs in the 1880s: they raised a mixture of Berkshire and Middle White, who were either slaughtered for the house (primarily in the autumn, possibly to ease the heavy entertainment schedule that accompanied the shooting), or (in years where the birth of large litters provided a surplus of pigs) sold at the market in Armagh.¹⁴³ This pattern of breeding continued well into the twentieth century at Caledon, Baronscourt, and Florence Court, where there may have been some pedigree breeding of pigs, as well as slaughter for home use during the 1910s and 1920s.¹⁴⁴

Those landlords who were interested in the breeding and raising of livestock also often became involved in the agricultural works on their estates. This was true of the 5th earl of Caledon, who continued his father's programme of breeding on the Caledon estate well into the twentieth century, and who additionally continued the carefully managed tillage practises on the estate.¹⁴⁵ Records of the 4th earl's interest in demesne agriculture begin in the 1880s,¹⁴⁶ and his son provided a more detailed record of the crops and produce harvested on the estate, including oats, potatoes, hay, straw, turnips, cabbage, marigolds, and beans, as well as the production, purchase, and sale of manure.¹⁴⁷ This sort of meticulous management was not always appreciated, however, by either peers or tenantry: the 4th earl of Belmore seems to have been ridiculed in the 1880s for his interest in the details of estate management, both at home at Castle Coole, and during his career as the Governor of New South Wales, Australia. In 1881 *The Bulletin* theorised that Belmore's presence in Australia was part of an effort to relieve his encumbered estates in Ireland and that 'by diligence, thrift, and the careful raising of cabbages, [he] succeeded in accomplishing his purpose before the usual term expired.'¹⁴⁸ On other estates, meticulous management was not necessarily a part of competitive husbandry: at Castle Leslie an unsuccessful turnip crop was substituted with purchased stock

¹⁴³ PRONI, Caledon Papers, D/2433/A/8/9. Stock Book for Caledon Farm, 1873-1884

¹⁴⁴ PRONI, Caledon Papers, D/2433/A/8/13. Stock Book for Caledon Farm, 1907-1917; PRONI, Abercorn Papers, D/623/C/12/73. Private Baronscourt Register of Pedigree Pigs, June 1910-September 1922; PRONI, Enniskillen Papers, D/1702/6/11. Monthly Account of Livestock on Florence Court Demesne, 1909-1918

¹⁴⁵ PRONI, Caledon Papers, D/2433/A/8/13. Stock Book for Caledon Farm, 1907-1917

¹⁴⁶ PRONI, Caledon Papers, D/2433/A/8/10. Stock Book for Caledon Farm, 1885-1895

¹⁴⁷ PRONI, Caledon Papers, D/2433/A/8/13. Stock Book for Caledon Farm, 1907-1917

¹⁴⁸ *The Bulletin* [Sydney, Australia], 20 August 1881

in order to make an appearance at the Monaghan County Show, much to the amusement of a young Shane Leslie (though not necessarily to the other agricultural competitors).¹⁴⁹

Throughout the late nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century livestock numbers and farming interest remained generally consistent, reflecting first the requirement of the aristocracy to interact with the industry on their estates, and secondly a continued interest in reinvestment even during some of the more troubled years of the aristocracy's late nineteenth and early twentieth century tenure. Large-scale farming, however, did not become a viable investment until well into the twentieth century. This was the period during which the Castlewellan estate saw its greatest changes, where one of the largest programmes of estate investment was embarked on by Lady Mabel Annesley during the years following the Great War. Previously, demesne gardens had turned only minimal profits, such as those at the small garden plant sale at Florence Court in 1907.¹⁵⁰ At Castlewellan, however, it was not road works, cattle breeding, or an expansion of the plantation that changed the face of the land in the late 1910s and 1920s, but a programme of farming that helped support Lady Mabel and her staff and tenants during the hard years of conflict in the early twentieth century. 'We farmed up to the windows,' Lady Mabel wrote in her self-illustrated biography.

Walking about all over the place were sheep with black feet and faces; and red and white dairy cows straight from Noah's Ark. There was a black bunchy cart-horse mare, with mane standing blot upright; there was an old sow with beautiful baroque outlines.¹⁵¹

For her, the picture was not, however, solely one of a rural idyll, but also of necessity. The dedication and connection to the land that she had felt all her life required her to reinvest her time in it in order to save the estate.

However, even the income from very substantial farm lands was not enough to support these families in their palatial homes, and the houses of all of these families required many thousands of acres to provide their maintenance. Even for the dukes of Abercorn, who retained upwards of 13,000 acres after 1925, farm incomes were inadequate to support the house and demesne.¹⁵² Castlewellan was sold under Lady Mabel's son to the Forestry

¹⁴⁹ Shane Leslie, *The End of a Chapter* (London, 1916), pp.17-18

¹⁵⁰ PRONI, Enniskillen Papers, D/1702/6/9. Record of plant sale at Florence Court, 1907

¹⁵¹ Annesley, *As the Sight is Bent*, p.25

¹⁵² Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, p.132

Commission, while the particular situation of other estates rendered them completely ineffectual as productive farms, rather than picturesque pleasure grounds. In the case of the Dartrey estate at Dawson's Grove, by the late 1920s the actual value had dropped so much that the family was unable to sell the demesne. At the death of the 3rd Earl in 1931 the estate was valued by William Swan and Son, who declared that because of the thick clay soil, loss of timber, and lack of potential for winter grazing, the land was barely worth the value of the building materials of the house on it.¹⁵³

An additional threat to the landed classes across Ireland during the 1920s was the political turmoil of the period, and specifically, terrorist attacks on landlords and their property perpetrated by the IRA. While none of these families lost their homes during the Anglo-Irish War or the Irish Civil War, the tenor of the period did have an effect on their daily lives. Terence Dooley has claimed that Castle Leslie was unaffected by the revolutionary period and the Anglo-Irish War, though the Leslie family was divided by religion and Home Rule: the village of Glaslough was primarily Protestant, and had been heavily armed and trained as part of the UVF movement.¹⁵⁴ Geography offered less protection elsewhere in Ulster: the location of the Kilmorey estate very near to the artificial boundary between Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State had a clear effect on the local culture during the 1910s and 1920s. The nearby town of Newry, called by Wilfred Ewart 'The Gate of Ulster', was partly owned by the Kilmorey family. The local population was split equally between Catholic and Protestant, with significant support for Sinn Féin. This may have had some effect on the limited amount of time Norah Countess of Kilmorey spent on the Down estate during the early 1920s, preferring instead to reside in London, or to visit friends elsewhere.¹⁵⁵

For those families who now found themselves resident in the Free State, especially, the threat of violence was very real: eleven homes were burned in Cavan, Donegal, and Monaghan during the Anglo-Irish War, a number which rose to seventeen during the Civil War.¹⁵⁶ Monaghan, home of the Leslies, Dartreys, and Rossmores, was the most heavily

¹⁵³ PRONI, Dartrey Papers, D/3053/8/26/2. Valuation of Dartrey Demesne by William Swan and Son, Auctioneers and Valuers, 10 October 1931

¹⁵⁴ Dooley, *The Decline of the Big House in Ireland*, p.246

¹⁵⁵ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/D/76/1. Diary of Norah Countess of Kilmorey, 1921-1922; PRONI, A.P.W. Malcomson, Introduction to the Kilmorey Papers

¹⁵⁶ Dooley, *The Decline of the Big House in Ireland*, pp.185,189

affected of the three counties. The retrospective safety of Castle Leslie meant very little to the Leslie family: like many landlords during this period, they left the Castle immediately after the Great War. While Sir John Leslie returning periodically to fulfil his duties as Lord Lieutenant of County Monaghan in 1921 and 1922, after warnings about gun-running in the area around Castle Leslie and an IRA attack while Marjorie and Anita Leslie were staying in Donegal, Shane Leslie decided to move his young family semi-permanently from Glaslough.¹⁵⁷

What changed most clearly and most immediately on the properties of the Ulster aristocracy during this time was how daily estate life was run, especially on estates like Castlewellan, where for two years a platoon of soldiers was quartered, and Mount Stewart, where the Londonderry family was under the guard of a troop of B-Specials and detectives because of the marquess' public role in the new Northern Irish government. Both homes were attacked in the 1920s. At Castlewellan, the attack was because of the military presence, and the family and servants waited in the cellar for the rifle fire to stop.¹⁵⁸ In 1921 Mount Stewart was also raided, one of a number of changes which prompted the establishment of the estate guard. But the Marchioness of Londonderry was well-prepared: she slept with a revolver (a gift from a military friend) at her bedside, and with her clothes set out in case she had to leave in the middle of the night.¹⁵⁹ According to Lady Mabel Annesley, eventually both the bullet holes and the bitterness faded at Castlewellan, but elsewhere, aristocrats left their Irish homes with no immediate intention of returning.¹⁶⁰ In many ways, these changes mark a clear infringement on how the daily lives of these families operated during this period: the housing of troops, the vigilance of bodyguards, the incursions into the homes and demesnes of these families forced changes in the lives of these families which interrupted the specific patterns of their existences. However, the alterations that were made on these estates during the Irish conflict did not actually fundamentally change the cultural patterns of aristocratic life during this period. At Mountstewart, despite the war and the presence of a pistol next to her bed, Edith marchioness of Londonderry continued to beautify her home and garden, interact with her peers and the local community, and travel between the many Londonderry houses. At Castlewellan, the pattern of elite life was interrupted, but this was due to the financial

¹⁵⁷ NLI, Leslie memoirs, MS 22,885; Leslie, *The Gilt and the Gingerbread*, pp.24,42,37

¹⁵⁸ Annesley, *As the Sight is Bent*, p.30

¹⁵⁹ Urquhart, *The Ladies of Londonderry*, p.151

¹⁶⁰ Annesley, *As the Sight is Bent*, p.30

limitations faced by Lady Mabel Annesley, who transformed the demesne into farmland in order to preserve the estate's parklands, forests, and home intact. The conflict in Northern Ireland had a distinct effect on the lives of these families, but it was a temporary one, and despite the anxiety felt by landowners and their families, the actual pattern of aristocratic culture during this time was not interrupted by the conflict.

The families in this case study managed to retain their homes well into the twentieth century, and in many cases, also kept very substantial parcels of land, even after the Land Acts of 1923 and 1925. In some cases, land purchase had allowed these families to alter their patterns of ownership and investment: where estates were not heavily in debt, sales (especially under the Wyndham Act) allowed aristocratic families to invest the profits, reaping dividends from alternate industries, and removing themselves somewhat from the precarious fortunes of twentieth-century agriculture. The aristocracy of Ulster altered their economic base during the period between 1870 and 1925, allowing the continuation of their way of life even during a period of rapid political and economic change. During this time they altered the realms in which they claimed power and earned income, thereby retaining some of the influence they had claimed in previous centuries, both locally and nationally. Their connections with the aristocracy and gentry across Britain continued, as did their relationship with the monarchy and the role they played within the British Armed Forces, but their power was transferred from the realms of politics and economics to the world of society, celebrity, taste, and the media. This period marks a transitional period for the families in this case study, in which their resilience and adaptability was tested. Up to 1925, they were largely able to preserve their incomes, homes, and demesnes, thereby enabling them in the twentieth century to remain central in the upper-class pan-British culture in which they had played a role for hundreds of years.

From 1870, the twelve families under examination in this study faced challenges to their political and economic supremacy that changed the ways in which they wielded power both on their estates and throughout the United Kingdom. For much of this period, the elite of Ulster retained some of the powers which had characterised their Ascendancy in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: members of these families regularly served at

Westminster as elected MPs, within the House of Lords, or as Representative Peers for Ireland, as well as dominating the positions within local government, and within the Empire. The landed classes of Ulster also claimed social power in the close relationship they shared with the monarchy, and in their dominance of the officer class of the United Kingdom's armed forces, and these relationships changed little throughout the fifty-five years of this study. From the 1870s onward, however, changes in attitudes to landownership and corresponding alterations in legislation across the United Kingdom alter the ways in which these families wielded power on and drew income from their estates. The introduction of parliamentary acts encouraging land purchase in Ireland in this period altered the ways in which landlords and tenants understood the concepts of landownership and profitability, while agrarian tensions in the countryside, and landlord responses to these tensions, changed the social climate within the Irish landscape. These changes operated differently in Ulster than elsewhere in Ireland, and they accordingly affected the society and culture of Ulster's landlords differently than they did in the rest of Ireland. This chapter has accordingly given a summary of the political and economic world of Ulster's elite during this period, delineating the powers of Ulster's aristocracy as they existed at the beginning of the period of study, and the challenges they faced during the period from 1870 to 1925, providing the political and economic context on which the rest of this study is based.

The legislative and social changes of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Ireland, and Ulster in particular, have led some historians to view the years between 1870 and 1925 as a period of decline, and to concentrate their analysis on the political and economic implications of this period of change. This thesis, however, will present an alternate view of this time, both in the scope of the study and in the conclusions drawn. For the culture of the aristocracy of Ulster, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were rather a time of adaptation and change, a period when the aristocracy of Ulster altered their power base, taking advantage of changing social currents to grasp new forms of cultural, rather than political, authority that would bolster their social relevance. As the aristocracy was faced with the social, political, and economic changes of the late nineteenth century, they adapted their culture to suit these alterations, thereby securing for themselves a place within early twentieth century society that was no longer justified by their political or economic power, but was based on their cultural power, their modes of aesthetic choice, their manipulation of the press and the public curiosity.

TWO

ADAPTATION, COMMUNITY, TRADITION: ELEMENTS OF CHANGE IN THE CONTRACTION OF THE ARISTOCRATIC MARRIAGE

Aristocratic marriage in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a social contract, both between husband and wife, and (because of the highly interconnected system of elite kinship) also between their families. Marriage allied families from across Britain and Ireland, thereby facilitating social, political, and financial dealings among the landed classes. Marriage was a key tool used by the aristocracy to encourage a sense of kinship and community among the elite, and to forge political, social, and economic alliances. Aristocratic marriage created a circuit of kinship around which all aspects of elite life were centred. As the nineteenth century became the twentieth, aristocratic matrimonial traditions in Britain and Ireland experienced a number of changes, and the complex and intertwined nature of aristocratic kinship meant that these changes affected elite family life in a way that was different from that seen elsewhere in the socio-economic spectrum. These alterations were significant, and were both influenced by, and in turn began to influence, social changes in the wider world of British and Irish elite culture.

This chapter aims to demonstrate how the marriage networks of the aristocracy of Ulster were used to support the culture of the elite. Marriage networks acted as a means of support for these families both by encouraging long-standing notions of community within the north of Ireland and throughout the United Kingdom. Additionally, these connections were manifestations of the ways these families were able to adapt their culture in tune with contemporary society, both by integrating new types of families within their circle of kinship, and by using new means of self-promotion, such as the growing printed media, to retain relevance into the twentieth century. The chapter will examine the network of alliances forged through aristocratic marriage, establishing the prevalence of new elements introduced during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The central concern of this work is

not, therefore, with the institution of marriage itself, but with how changes in the composition of the aristocratic and elite world were reflected in the marriage network. By looking at marriage connections and changes within the system of aristocratic marital kinship, and at how this aspect of aristocratic life was used as a tool to adapt to social, economic, and political changes, the chapter intends to demonstrate that the alterations made by the aristocracy of Ulster in their marriage patterns were conscious adaptations of existing forms, not changes forced onto an unwilling, or unknowing, aristocracy. As these families have largely been neglected as the subjects of cultural history, and the marriage alliances of these families have not been examined previously, the detail within this chapter is new. Additionally, the way this chapter examines how these networks reflected changes in society has not been utilised in previous historical studies: by looking at the changes in the composition of the network aristocratic marriage of these families, this research supplies previously unexplored detail about the aristocracy of Ulster.

New patterns of marriage included a small rise in divorce rates within aristocratic circles after the 1880s, the significant minority of British and Irish aristocrats who married into families from outside the United Kingdom, and the ways in which Society and the ‘marriage market’ across the United Kingdom offered the aristocracy the means of revitalising their declining way of life. The coverage of the elite weddings of Ulster’s aristocracy in the press from the 1890s onward was a phenomenon that both emphasised the important role of display within the celebration of the elite marriage, and demonstrates the increased awareness the aristocracy had of the power of media coverage. The changes made by the elite during this period, in their use of the press, and in the ways in which they adapted their practices of marriage, demonstrates the important place held by the community of intermarried families within the landed classes of Britain and Ireland.

The interconnected nature of this particular group of peers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is indicative of the ways in which the gentry and aristocracy formed marital and social connections more generally, and how they balanced power within their community at large. The continuing propensity of the landed classes to form alliances with families with whom they already held connections through locality, politics, and society demonstrates an area of formidable continuity between the Ascendancy heyday in the late eighteenth century and the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A number of aristocratic families in Ulster were allied through marriage, and these connections worked

alongside more readily identifiable aspects of aristocratic life such as land ownership and politics to form a community of shared interests among the Ulster peers. Historians have recognised that within aristocratic society, there was a marked feeling of community, despite the geographic spread of the British and Irish landed classes.¹

This concept of kinship is a crucial one when examining the social life of the aristocracy, and a central concern of this thesis. Leonore Davidoff has recognised that this circuit of inter-related families with a set of shared interests was the basis of Society, which was developed to make these important ties of kinship beneficial within the social and political environment.² Additionally, because such a large part of the aristocratic ideology was connected to notions of lineage and descent, blood ties were held in especially high esteem, not only as tools for advancement in political and social realms, but also as manifestations of elite descent.³ These marriages, forged within a political, social, and geographical area where the family held the most power, helped to consolidate influence, and forged a tightly knit circle between aristocratic kin. This can be seen in the interactions of the Abercorn family, which by the early twentieth century was presided over in social terms by the elderly dowager duchess of Abercorn, mother of the 2nd duke. The direct descendants of the 1st duke and duchess numbered into the hundreds by this time, and her son Lord Ernest Hamilton referred to her in his autobiography as ‘the golden link that held together some fifty families scattered here and there about the United Kingdom.’⁴ The engagement of any of her grandchildren was quickly followed by a trip to her home at Coates, in Sussex, where the future spouse was introduced to the matriarch, and through this introduction, incorporated into the vast Abercorn family circle.

There is also evidence within this sample of the Ulster aristocracy of a tendency to marry within their own geographic sphere, forging alliances with the families of other Ulster peers, thereby furthering the sense of an elite community. This tendency was certainly furthered by a number of factors beyond proximity, however. Many families from within Ulster’s elite formed a part of a wide network of evangelical family ties spread across Ireland

¹ Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles: Society Etiquette and the Season* (London, 1973), p.17

² *ibid.*, p.27

³ Leonore Davidoff, Megan Doolittle, Janet Fink, Katherine Holden, *The Family Story: Blood, Contract, Intimacy, 1830-1960* (London, 1999), p.78

⁴ Lord Ernest Hamilton, *Forty Years On* (London, 1922), p.301; PRONI, Abercorn Papers, D/623/A/26. Dowager duchess of Abercorn to her son, the 2nd duke of Abercorn, 9 January 1888

and Britain during the nineteenth century, including the Abercorns, Annesleys, and Ernes.⁵ Additionally, as has been recognised by Alvin Jackson, the leisure patterns of the Irish landed classes had a great deal of influence on the network with which they contracted alliances: within south Ulster, this was primarily centred around the yachting on Lough Erne, and almost certainly contributed to the close connection between the Erne and Enniskillen families.⁶ Journalists at the time emphasised how the lengthy friendship of the Ernes and the Enniskillens as cooperative landlords and neighbours was strengthened by the practise of intermarriage in the 1870s.⁷ The particular friendship between these families, which had continued throughout the nineteenth century, did not prevent the participation of other members of Ulster's elite: at the 1870 wedding of Viscount Crichton and Lady Florence Cole, Lord Claud Hamilton, (son of the 1st duke of Abercorn) stood as best man, and he returned to Crom Church a few days later for the wedding of Robert George Gaussen (nephew of the earl of Enniskillen) and Selina Cole Hamilton (niece of the earl and countess of Erne).⁸

Intermarriage within these families not only strengthened friendships and neighbourly relations between landlords: marriages between families with shared religious, sporting, local, and political interests helped shore up the community of the entire aristocracy during a period when the landed stability of the upper classes was being compromised. As Hempton and Hill have recognised, the evangelical faith of many of these families played a role both in encouraging these marriages and in furthering principles of responsibility and stability within the landed community, strengthening the social influence of these families both within their localities and across the United Kingdom.⁹ This network of families was located in the central area of this study, in south Ulster, with connections into northern Leinster and Connacht, and formed a network not only of marriage and kinship, but of shared landed and political interests, combating (with variable success) threats to the Irish Protestant Church,

⁵ David Hempton and Myrtle Hill, *Evangelical Protestantism in Ulster Society, 1740-1890* (London, 1992), pp.131-2

⁶ Alvin Jackson, *Colonel Edward Saunderson: Land and Loyalty in Victorian Ireland* (Oxford, 1995), p.188

⁷ PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1702/9/4. Scrapbook of newspaper cuttings, sketches and caricatures by Florence Cole, 1864-1903

⁸ PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1702/9/4. Scrapbook of newspaper cuttings, sketches and caricatures by Florence Cole, 1864-1903

⁹ Hempton and Hill, *Evangelical Protestantism in Ulster Society*, pp.131-2

the spread of tenant influence and agrarian disturbance, and Home Rule throughout the late nineteenth century.¹⁰

The practice of marriage within what Jackson refers to as ‘the aristocratic and gentry clans of the Fermanagh-Down nexus’ continued for these families throughout the nineteenth century.¹¹ The marriage of Captain Edward Dawson to Lady Elizabeth Meade, daughter of the 4th earl of Clanwilliam, in 1898, tied the earls of Dartrey to fellow aristocrats in county Cavan, as well as pulling both families into the wider network of Irish and British families that formed the elite community. In the twentieth century, these alliances seem to have become even more popular, a sign of the increased consolidation of the power of the landed classes in the Edwardian period, and of the growing regional interests of these families. In 1902 the Londonderry and Dartrey families were connected by the marriage of Lady Helen Stewart (daughter of the 6th marquess of Londonderry) to Lord Giles Fox-Strangways, son of the 5th earl of Ilchester and his countess, Lady Mary (née Dawson). The marriage of Viscount Crichton to Lady Mary Grosvenor in 1903 was followed in 1906 by the wedding of Lady Mabel Crichton and Lady Mary’s brother, Captain Hugh Grosvenor. The Enniskillen and Annesley families became allied through similar connections: in 1907 the 5th earl of Enniskillen married Irene Miller Mundy. Two years later, her half-sister, Evelyn Mundy, married the 6th earl Annesley. In 1913 the family of the earl of Erne was again connected to the Dartreys when the Hon. George Crichton (son of the 4th earl of Erne) married another Lady Mary Dawson, niece of the countess of Ilchester and daughter of the 2nd earl of Dartrey.

It was around the beginning of this period, in the 1870s, that marriages that directly encouraged these interconnected family ties began to be remarked on with frequency in the press. In 1870, an article dealing with one of a series of matches that allied the Cole and Crichton families declared that ‘the fashion of marriage between cousins is apparently becoming popular.’¹² This form of familial-marital connection was again highlighted during the 1872 marriage of Lady Kathleen Cole with Lieutenant Colonel Charles Villers, her maternal first cousin. Like the marriages mentioned above, these matches demonstrate both how important the extended family circle was in introducing eligible marriage partners, and

¹⁰ Jackson, *Colonel Edward Saunderson*, p.187

¹¹ *ibid.*, p.187

¹² PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1702/9/4. Scrapbook of newspaper cuttings, sketches and caricatures by Florence Cole, 1864-1903. Untitled newspaper clipping, 28 December 1870

the ways in which the elite furthered their sense of community, especially in a time of threat, by continually developing the connections between families who shared their interests in terms of politics, religion, or leisure.

While marriage had always been at least partly a financial transaction for the British and Irish elite, money became an increasingly important question in influencing aristocratic matches across the United Kingdom during the late nineteenth century, as economic depression eroded landed incomes and political changes raised taxation. At the same time, American agrarian and industrial culture was booming, producing in the United States a number of super-wealthy entrepreneurs.¹³ In this way, the marriages between British and Irish peers and American heiresses involved an exchange that conforms well with Bourdieu's model of accumulated cultural capital and with the traditional means of forging aristocratic marriage: just as wealthy peers would dedicate portions of their fortunes to obtain cultural status symbols such as public school educations, art collections, and racing stables, aristocrats in financial need were willing to exchange their centuries of acquired elite status to access the millions that came with the daughters of the American industrialists.¹⁴ Marriage into the pan-British landed classes was viewed in practical, financial terms on the other side of the Atlantic as well, giving rise to publications such as *Titled Americans*, an annual periodical running between 1890 and 1915. *Titled Americans* listed not only those American women who had already successfully married into the European aristocracy, but also advertised 'a carefully compiled list of Peers who are supposed to be eager to lay their coronets and incidentally their hearts at the feet of the all-conquering American girl.'¹⁵

Among the aristocratic clans of Ulster, two families became directly connected with these 'Dollar Princesses', though through the vast circle of aristocratic kinship, almost all of these families had some connection to at least one of the many transatlantic brides. The Lesliees were among the earliest families to ally themselves with Americans, though the marriage of Jack Leslie and Leonie Jerome in 1884 was popular neither with the Lesliees, nor the American Jeromes.¹⁶ According to Shane Leslie, himself the offspring of this union,

¹³ Ruth Brandon, *The Dollar Princesses* (London, 1980), p.24

¹⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Translated by Richard Nice (London, 1984), p.140

¹⁵ Brandon, *The Dollar Princesses*, p.4; *Titled Americans: A list of American ladies who have married foreigners of rank. Annually revised* (New York, 1890)

¹⁶ Terence Dooley, *The Decline of the Big House in Ireland* (Dublin, 2001), p.45

marriage into an American family in the 1870s and 1880s ‘was considered as experimental as mating with Martians.’¹⁷ Additionally, while many American brides did bring money to their marriages, some did not. Leonie Jerome was one of these women: although her father had ostensibly made three million dollar fortunes in his career on the New York stock market, he had also lost all three of these fortunes by the 1880s.¹⁸ Accordingly, Leonie Jerome’s marriage portion depended much more on her mother’s generosity than her sister’s had done the decade before.¹⁹ Shane Leslie himself would go on to marry an American woman: Marjorie Ide, the daughter of an American diplomat, in 1912. While Marjorie offered status through her father’s vast governmental and diplomatic connections, as well as her own cosmopolitan outlook, like Leonie Jerome, she was not an heiress.

Despite the fact that some American brides brought necessary wealth to their marriages, in 1893—nearly ten years after the Leslie-Jerome union—Harold Nicolson’s governess still reacted with appalled shock at the engagement of his cousin Lord Terence Blackwood to the wealthy New Yorker Florence Davis.²⁰ Before the marriage of Terence Blackwood and Florence Davis, the Dufferins had already been associated with American marriages: Archibald, earl of Ava, was one of those eligible peers whose name appeared in *Titled Americans*, especially after a rumour had spread of a broken engagement with Miss Lillian Price of New York (who would later marry the 8th duke of Marlborough). When Lillian was re-introduced to the family as the new duchess of Marlborough at the French Embassy in the early 1890s, Lady Dufferin expressed her disappointment, writing to her daughter Hermione about how sweet she was, and that they ‘all wished Archie had been the happy man.’²¹ The Dufferins were very much the sort of family who would benefit most from the introduction of an heiress: through lineage and the Marquess’ faultless diplomatic career their status was extremely high, but because of the organisation of their estates and the

¹⁷ Shane Leslie, *The End of a Chapter* (London, 1916), p.110

¹⁸ Elisabeth Kehoe, *The Titled Americans: Three American Sisters and the British Aristocratic World into Which They Married* (New York, 2004), p.xx

¹⁹ Clara Jerome promised the young couple an annual £300-£400 on their engagement, which compared unfavourably with the yearly £2000 Jennie Jerome and Randolph Churchill received from the Jerome family. Mrs. Jerome also offered advice: that they should economise by living with the Leslie family at Glaslough and in London as much as possible. NLI, Leslie Papers, L/1/4. Leonie Jerome to Jack Leslie, 6 August 1884

²⁰ Harold Nicolson, *Helen’s Tower* (London, 1937), p.25

²¹ PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/M/2/44. Hariot, marchioness of Dufferin and Ava to Lady Hermione Blackwood, n.d.

downturn in Irish agriculture in the 1870s, they barely remained financially solvent into the early twentieth century.

As is demonstrated by these marriages, which allied two of Ulster's aristocratic families with American women who were not necessarily heiresses, the situation in reality was less mercenary than was often presented in the contemporary press and the histories of the twentieth century. The effect of American marriages was social as much as it was economic, and these marriages provided an entrée for Americans in British society. Many peers were connected at one time or another with American women: either legitimately, or solely in the busy gossip pages of the press, which quickly capitalised on the glamour associated with these newcomers.²² The vast amount of attention the newly arrived American received from the press suggests that many of the 'couplings' reported during this period simply sold papers, and were not necessarily based in fact. In the 1870s, both Derrick Westerna, Lord Rossmore, and Francis Needham, Lord Newry (later 3rd earl of Kilmorey) were linked to Mary Stevens (called Minnie, later Mrs. Arthur Paget), although in the estimation of one Mrs. Adair, 'the first means business, but the second only amusement.'²³ Later, the 3rd earl of Kilmorey's son was linked with the pharmaceutical heiress Lulu Pfizer, through widespread press coverage during the Season of 1904. Miss Pfizer denied the engagement, and the Kilmoreys do not seem to have responded to the reports, which were flattering neither to the Kilmorey family (one article remarks on the Countess' status as a great beauty as being due to the 'long memories and short sight' of the London correspondents) nor toward the Pfizers, who were painted in the press as exceptionally avaricious and grasping.²⁴ The fact that the Kilmoreys kept the clippings is enlightening: it is clear that the family cared about the press they got, looked at it, and chose to preserve it. The retention of the clippings is indicative of the changed attitude within the landed classes to the press during the early twentieth century: the collection of clipping books, the preservation of these tidbits of Society gossip are a part of the wider effort among Ulster's elite to retain for

²² From 1904 ladies' journal *The Queen* began a weekly column entitled 'Americans in London' which followed the social calendars of these new celebrities. The Leslies and the Rossmores were often included in the 'American' parties discussed in these columns, which were always categorised as such, even when the hostess was a figure like Lady Randolph Churchill, Leonie Leslie's sister, who had been resident in Britain since her marriage in 1874.

²³ Brandon, *The Dollar Princesses*, pp.65-66

²⁴ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/D/14/1-23. Mixed outsize volume containing loose letters, telegrams, etc. about Lord Newry [later 4th earl of Kilmorey]

themselves, through their use of the press, a relevance within the minds of the wider public. This consciousness of the role the press and the burgeoning concept of ‘celebrity’ was beginning to play in daily life was a part of the wider effort of Ulster’s elite to adapt to the changes of the new century.

According to J.H.S. Escott, ‘the fair Yankee has no sooner made a conquest and led an English aristocrat to the altar than she commences immediately to consider what she can do for her compatriots with the leverage in her hands.’²⁵ While this may have been true in many cases, the experience of the American women who married into the aristocracy of Ulster only seems to have supported this to an extent. Leonie Leslie was overjoyed to welcome the American bride of her son, Shane, into the Leslie family,²⁶ but other young women received a frostier welcome, and some of the more established émigrés did not welcome the intrusion of newer American brides at all. This was certainly the case for Lady Florence Blackwood (née Davis) after her marriage into the Dufferin family. While hunting in Scotland at the home of her sister-in-law, Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson (née Blackwood), Lady Florence encountered the marchioness of Londonderry and the duchess of Manchester (née Maria Consuelo Iznaga de Valle), two scions of late Victorian Society. As far as Lady Hermione Blackwood could tell, they were being observed very closely, especially by the duchess of Manchester, one of the earliest ‘Dollar Princesses’ to make her mark on aristocratic society. Despite her own American upbringing, the duchess was highly critical of the influx of trans-Atlantic brides into British Society, so much so that she was temporarily estranged from her son when he married an American in 1900. Lady Londonderry seems to have shared the opinions of her companion: on meeting the new Lady Curzon, originally Grace Elvina Hinds of Alabama, in the 1910s, she declared: ‘Lady Curzon is pretty, but of course, like all Americans, she will not last. English women seem to have more roots and keep their looks and energy longer.’²⁷ Lady Florence could therefore expect no succour from her countrywomen, or from the

²⁵ J.H.S. Escott, *Society in London, By a Foreign Resident* (London, 1886), p.49

²⁶ PRONI, Leslie Papers, MIC/606 Reel 3, M/1/1A. Leonie Leslie to Marjorie Ide, 9 April 1912

²⁷ PRONI, Theresa Londonderry Papers, D/2846/1/13/1. Theresa, dowager marchioness of Londonderry, 27 March 1917. Lady Grace Curzon was actually the second American to marry Lord Curzon: his first wife, originally Mary Leiter of Chicago, had died in 1906

established British and Irish hostesses, and her sister-in-law Lady Hermione guessed that ‘descriptions of Flora from eye witnesses will soon be all over the country.’²⁸

Ultimately, just as these transplanted American brides had the opportunities to both help and hinder their countrywomen, their overall effect on British Society as a whole was ambiguous. Christopher Breward has recognised that American influence changed the tone of Society in general (‘where it had been rich and fruity it was becoming slick and snappy’²⁹), but alterations for other reasons also became increasingly apparent in the structure and the permanency of aristocratic Society during this time. Those Americans who did come to live in Britain became a part of the fabric of Society, but were also always seen as something just slightly apart: in 1908 newspapers still remarked on the attendance of the American guests at aristocratic weddings separately, even when the group was substantial, while from the early twentieth century the journal *The Queen* included a special article each week entitled ‘Americans in Society’.³⁰ Because of their small numbers, the specific impact of these women on society in Ulster was minimal: early brides like Leonie Leslie worked hard to integrate themselves into the existing fabric of the British and Irish social worlds, and it was only within London Society that there was a recognised coterie of ‘American’ hostesses and socialites, which only made itself felt well into the twentieth century.

Marriage with partners from other foreign backgrounds occurred occasionally within this group, although not in large enough numbers to significantly alter the marital trends of these families. Over the fifty-five year period, the twelve families in this sample were connected only three times with spouses of foreign, non-American origin: in 1877 the Honourable Arthur Cole married Adelaide Blackwood, an Australian; in 1911 Mary Westenra, daughter of the 5th Lord Rossmore, married the South African multi-millionaire Abe Bailey; in 1920 Lady Eleanor Dawson was married to Janos Orsolya Kiss of Budapest. Like the American marriages, these unions were not obviously formed for financial reasons, although some of these partners (industrial heiress Florence Davis and the exceptionally wealthy Abe Bailey) did bring significant levels of wealth to their marriages. The majority

²⁸ PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/F/6/65. Lady Hermione Blackwood to the 1st Marquess of Dufferin and Ava, 31 October 1893

²⁹ Christopher Breward, *The Hidden Consumer: Masculinities, Fashion and City Life, 1860-1914* (Manchester, 1999), p.178

³⁰ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/D/22/1-34. Scrapbook containing news cutting from the wedding of Lady Cynthia Needham

did not, however, and it must be assumed that these marriages were what was termed ‘love matches’ during the period: marriage outside British and Irish society was looked at as a curiosity, if not a misstep, and these matches did not always offer material advantages to offset the social stigma. This reflects the emphasis during the nineteenth century on ‘affective’ marriages, as well as the widening social sphere open to elite men and women during this time. Importantly, though, this evidence demonstrates that the picture presented both in the contemporary press and in historical literature of Dollar Princesses is a fallacious one: these women did not bring significant wealth into Britain on their marriages, and their introduction into the aristocracy of Ulster did not result in significant financial gain.³¹

The actual role played by money in the forging of aristocratic circles of kinship was, therefore, somewhat ambiguous. The introduction of brides from abroad was not necessarily for the purpose of adding their dowries to the ancestral fortune, just as couples from within the aristocracy were not born solely out of mercenary means. It was, however, still important, and certainly formed a topic of conversation when the aristocracy discussed the matches of their peers. In March of 1917, Theresa dowager marchioness of Londonderry wrote to her son, the marquess, about the upcoming marriage of Mary Hamilton, daughter of the 3rd duke of Abercorn. ‘The Abercorn is going to marry Ronald Kenyon-Slaney. They neither of them have any money, and I hear she refused Eddie Stanley, so evidently she is not at all mercenary. I hear Kenyon-Slaney is very good-looking.’³² It is clear that while the marriage between Mary Hamilton and Robert Kenyon-Slaney was unusual enough for it to be remarked on, there is also something like admiration (albeit cynical and grudging) in Theresa’s estimation of the bride’s lack of avarice. This is tempered by the patronising tone

³¹ The idea of the ‘American Heiress’ as the stereotype of the foreign bride in elite British circles is similar, and no doubt related, to the concept of the eighteenth-century Irish ‘heiress’ examined in the work of A.P.W. Malcomson, Toby Barnard, and others. Like the nineteenth century American brides of the Ulster aristocracy, those women who were abducted ostensibly for the purpose of financial gain during the eighteenth century did not always come with great fortunes attached to their names, and importantly, as Malcomson and Wilson have pointed out, they were far from representative of the wider picture. In this way, the idea of the ‘heiress’ was one that was familiar to the elite, and to landed patterns of marriage by the late nineteenth century. Toby Barnard, *The Abduction of a Limerick Heiress: Social and Political Relations in mid-Eighteenth century Ireland* (Dublin, 1998); James Kelly, ‘The abduction of women of fortune in eighteenth-century Ireland’, *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, 9 (1994), pp.7-43; A.P.W. Malcomson, *The Pursuit of the Heiress: Aristocratic Marriage in Ireland, 1740-1840* (Belfast, 2006); Deborah Wilson, *Women, Marriage and Property in Wealthy Landed Families in Ireland, 1750-1850* (Manchester, 2009)

³² PRONI, Theresa, Lady Londonderry Papers, D/2846/1/13/1. Theresa, dowager marchioness of Londonderry to Charles, 7th marquess of Londonderry, 2 March 1917

used, however, and shows that while it was not the only factor that influenced elite marriage in the early twentieth century, it was still of great importance to these families.

The financial power of the families involved was increasingly displayed in the actual wedding itself, which was both a celebration of the union of two families, and for many aristocrats, also an opportunity to impress new family members, friends, and the wider British public with the wealth, taste, and social connections of those directly involved. Where the wedding was held played an important part in this: Patricia Jalland has claimed that the most fashionable church was St. George's in Hanover Square, but the most stylish of Ulster's aristocracy seems to have alternately rather patronised St. Peter's in Eaton Square, Belgravia, especially after the turn of the twentieth century.³³ Weddings were largely held in the Parliamentary recesses (January was popular) and during the Season itself, and were primarily afternoon affairs, with the service often held at around 2 p.m., followed by a reception at the home of the bride's family (or hosted by friends of the family, for those families without appropriate London accommodation). The chapels were usually decorated especially for the occasion: throughout the period lilies and palms both made frequent features among the décor at fashionable weddings. Preference for the celebrant often combined the services of the local minister and the adored clergyman from the family estate, with high-ranking clergy such as bishops involving themselves in the weddings of the most exalted families.

The form taken by the wedding coverage is very clearly indicative of what a wedding meant for the aristocracy: as Leonore Davidoff has recognised, marriage symbolised a necessary change in status for both bride and groom, and just as this status was formally declared by presentation at Court,³⁴ so was it presented to Society and to the British public at large through the easily interpreted forms of fashion and consumption. The presentation of this material to the public is, in fact, an extremely important aspect of aristocratic weddings at this time: families wrote (or commissioned) and submitted the printed copy to journals like *The Queen* themselves, exhibiting their awareness of the interest that would be taken by the public in the ceremonial rites of the landed classes. These families selected the means by which their clothes, guests, and gifts would be presented to the public, thereby also demonstrating their awareness of the importance of media attention and public interest to

³³ Patricia Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics, 1860-1914* (Oxford, 1986), p.38

³⁴ Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, p.25

their events. Through their use of the press, certain members of Ulster's elite were able to carve a new role as arbiters of taste for the entire public, and in no area of aristocratic life was this stated more clearly than in the publicity that surrounded Society weddings, especially from the turn of the century onwards. This was indicative of the wider transition during the first quarter of the twentieth century of increased media access and interest in British culture at large, a change that was recognised by the elite during the time. 'The Victorians and Edwardians were more intimate, more serious, more stately, and above all less theatrical,' Lady Muriel Beckwith recorded in her memoirs. 'Broadcasting, photographs in the Press, snapshots of the bride and bridegroom, a thousand and one details of publicity now extant, would have been disdained as bad form in the past.'³⁵ By harnessing public interest in elite fashion, and especially marital fashion, the aristocracy continued to remain culturally powerful and socially relevant within British and Irish life.

The coverage of elite weddings in contemporary newspapers and journals was especially emphatic about the importance of dress, following the lead of their readership. Reports of the fashionable Society weddings made up large sections of the women's magazines of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and journals like *The Queen*, which catered to an affluent, stylish audience, especially concentrated on the sartorial aspects of women's lives.³⁶ This was, however, also true for most contemporary newspapers, and descriptions of the dress of the bride, bridesmaids, and honoured wedding guests vied with information on the wedding gifts for column inches. As a bridge between the private person and the public social world, dress was able to carry and convey meanings relative to identity and persona more than any other cultural wares.³⁷ The ways in which aristocrats used (or, in some cases, failed to use) these tools is indicative of how they viewed themselves and their place both in Society and in the greater (and swiftly changing) world around them. As has been recognised by Elizabeth Wilson in her study of fashion as a modern social tool, 'the importance for a woman of distinguishing herself from her rivals could not be overestimated,'³⁸ and it is true that appearance was a crucial part of the Season's rules and rituals. Wilson has seen this as being due, at least in part, to the importance of fashion as a

³⁵ Lady Muriel Beckwith, *When I Remember* (London, 1936), pp.254-5

³⁶ Christopher Breward, 'Femininity and Consumption: The Problem of the Late Nineteenth Century Fashion Journal', in Peter McNeil (ed.), *Fashion: Critical and Primary Sources, Volume 3: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 2009), p.362

³⁷ Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (London, 1985), p.2

³⁸ *ibid.*, p.123

tool for social mobility, and the necessary conjunction of this utility of dress with the necessary social and financial negotiations that were a central part of the aristocratic union.³⁹ The dress of any young aristocrat in London during the Season reflected on her family's ability to provide for her, and this was made clear to all debutantes. Appearance and self-presentation remained one of the most rigorously controlled and critiqued aspects of the social world for young debutantes throughout this period. Contemporaries in the fashion industry were aware of (and promoted for their own gains) how important dress was within the competitive ranks of London Society, and stressed this in etiquette guides and consumer periodicals such as clothing catalogues and advertisements, emphasising the role of appearance as a social asset and an indicator of status and morals.⁴⁰ The reason for the importance placed on presentation for debutantes is transparent: the goal of elite young women in coming out in London was to secure themselves a position in the social world independent from their parents, and one of the only ways of succeeding at this was to marry one of the eligible bachelors who haunted the social scene. To fail to attract one of these gentlemen through the combination of personal charms and family standing made the future of even the most elite young women extremely uncertain. While some matches were based on the strength of a particular family alliance, as Wilson has recognised, 'the niceties of courtship... required that marriage be officially the outcome of personal attraction and mutual love. The dress of the nineteenth-century virgin on the marriage market had therefore subtly to convey family status as well as personal desirability.'⁴¹

In his analysis of the social significance of culture, Pierre Bourdieu has recognised that while certain aspects of society are given guaranteed legitimacy within any culture, others are seen as inhabiting a social borderline.⁴² Painting, literature, and architecture were forms of cultural currency imbued with high status, while less well-recognised forms produced a battleground where cultural legitimacy was more heavily contested. It was within these realms where individual taste could be most obviously traced that the competition for cultural legitimacy was the highest. For the aristocracy of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the struggle over cultural authority was partly based in these realms of personal

³⁹ *ibid.*, p.122

⁴⁰ Breward, *The Hidden Consumer*, pp.41, 261. Quoted in Breward from G.P. Fox, *Fashion, The Power That Influences The World* (New York and London, 1872), and H. Dennis Bradley, *Vogue: a Clothing Catalogue for Pope and Bradley* (London, 1912)

⁴¹ Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*, p.123

⁴² Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p.132

preference, manifested in fashion, food, and to some extent in such aesthetic choices as home furnishings. If this theory applies to the elite of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to some extent those aristocrats who were most concerned with these peripheral matters declare themselves by their concern to be more marginal within the terms of the cultural status markers of elite society, forced to assert their good taste in order to gain a foothold within the most accepted area of Society.

According to Elizabeth Wilson, 'it is in this marginalised area of the contingent, the decorative, the futile, that not simply a new aesthetic but a new cultural order may seed itself,'⁴³ and for aristocrats short on either traditional forms of status or those who were short on cash, the cultural 'distinction' discussed by Bourdieu could be declared through achieving a measure of fame in one of these subsidiary areas. This behaviour may be apparent in the conscious attention that is paid to fashion and appearance in the Dufferin family in the late nineteenth century, when the family, established members of the political and social elite, felt their financial control within their world to be slipping. Lord Ernest Hamilton, son of the 1st duke of Abercorn, observed that during the late Victorian era 'both sexes dressed with great care, for it is one of the established truths of life that, in communities where the brain-pan is not over-taxed, the question of dress always assumes an exaggerated importance.'⁴⁴ The satirical tone in this observation, though meaningful in itself, should not obscure the important place that fashion held within aristocratic society. Fashion could be seen as frivolous in theory, but it could not be ignored.

Often, the wedding coverage concentrated on describing the dress of the bride and her youth and beauty, especially at those weddings where either the mother of the bride or of the groom was an established and legendarily stylish Society hostess. This was certainly true for the weddings of the Kilmorey family, over which Eleanor, dowager countess of Kilmorey, held a great deal of influence. On 19 January 1920, shortly before the wedding of her son, Francis, 4th earl, to Lady Norah Hastings, the dowager countess oversaw the final fitting of the bride's gown and helped choose the bridesmaids' dresses.⁴⁵ Just as they had at her own wedding in 1881 (when she was praised as being 'the prettiest bride of the Season' and for

⁴³ Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*, p.245

⁴⁴ Lord Ernest Hamilton, *The Halcyon Era: A Rambling Reverie of Now and Then* (London, 1933), p.38

⁴⁵ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/D/15/1-6. Journal of the Countess of Kilmorey, 19 January 1920

having the most stylish dress),⁴⁶ and again in 1908 at the wedding of her daughter, Lady Cynthia Needham, to the 8th earl of Jersey, the press concentrated their coverage on the clothes of the bride, bridesmaids, and elite female guests, providing high fashion descriptions of the gowns.⁴⁷

Within this very new realm of press promotion were integrated aspects of traditional landed society that played an equally important role in the conscious marketing of the elite as a part of a compelling British and Irish landed tradition. A clear indicator of this was the bridal veil, already laden with symbolism. For the aristocracy of Ulster, however, the veil often acted as a symbol of family tradition, as well as a figurative protector of feminine purity. The veils of many brides had been passed down through generations, symbolising the connection of the bride and groom within both the aristocratic community and within the traditions of the ruling classes.⁴⁸ Other brides wore antique lace as a part of their gown, or integrated other elements of family tradition within their clothing: Lady Helen Stewart's wreath was created by the head gardener at Wynyard Park from orange blossoms and myrtle 'grown from a cutting taken from her mother's bridal bouquet.'⁴⁹ The reuse of apparel is important within the context of the aristocratic wedding: other items of clothing were rarely used in second or third generations, and to recycle antique clothing outside the context of costumed balls doubtless would have caused commentary on the eccentricity of the wearer.⁵⁰ Yet, within the context of elite weddings, this was a part of family tradition, suggesting possibly even the tie between the costume of the bride and the ceremonial attire of the aristocrat at royal functions.

To suggest that the preponderance of expensive material goods associated with weddings has connections to Thorstein Veblen's theories of conspicuous consumption,⁵¹ or Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of symbolic capital, does not take an great leap of imagination. As well as the enormous amount of press dedicated to the clothes of the wedding party and to

⁴⁶ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/E/2. Newspaper clippings on the wedding of Lord Kilmorey to Eleanor Baldock, 1881

⁴⁷ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/d/22/1-34. Newspaper clippings on the wedding of Lady Cynthia Needham, 1908; Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/D/12/1-19: Newspaper clippings on the wedding of Lord Kilmorey and Lady Norah Hastings, 1920

⁴⁸ Valerie Cumming, *Understanding Fashion History* (London, 2004), p.110

⁴⁹ *The Queen*, volume CXI (1902), p.190

⁵⁰ Cumming, *Understanding Fashion History*, p.109

⁵¹ Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York, 1899)

fashionable guests, wedding gifts were regularly delineated in the coverage of these events. Coverage in newspapers and journals always emphasised the number and provenance of the gifts, and highlighted, in particular, incidents of generosity by royalty and tenantry to the aristocratic couple, thereby emphasising the social place of the family within the country's hierarchy.⁵² Crucial within this was the way in which these contributions were described: most articles on fashionable weddings primarily described only a certain type of gift: namely, those which were particularly extravagant (jewellery and silver), given by royalty (Princess Louise was a frequent attendee and gift-giver at these elite weddings), or given by corporate or civic bodies, or by tenants. The presence of these types of guests at the ceremony itself was also invariably remarked on, and the lists of attendees often took up the majority of column inches in the press, especially in newspapers, rather than in ladies' journals, which dedicated more space to fashion.

The wedding gifts were additionally often displayed in their hundreds or thousands for the guests, public, and press to view before the ceremonies of the more exalted members of the peerage, along with the bride's trousseau.⁵³ Where the trousseau was described in the press, the emphasis echoed that of the rest of the coverage of these events: the stylish day dresses, extravagant eveningwear, and private accoutrements of the bride were used to impress upon the reading public the social and cultural power of the elite family. This was particularly evident in the trousseau of Lady Helen Stewart, in 1902, which included lingerie patriotically made from linen from County Down. The plain linen, which was praised as being of the highest quality, was further embellished with trim of Valenciennes lace: fortunately for the lucky bride, her sweet nature and popularity around her father's Down estate made the workers 'happy to embroider it.'⁵⁴

⁵² PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1939/27/7,8. Alphabetical list of names of gift givers at the wedding of Viscount Crichton and Lady Mary Cavendish Grosvenor. PRONI, Londonderry Papers, D/2846/3/24/1. Newspaper clipping in scrapbook regarding the wedding of Lady Helen Stewart and Lord Stavordale: 'A Society Beauty and her Trousseau', 1902

⁵³ *The Queen*, 13 June 1903, p.929. Wedding of Lady Mary Grosvenor and Viscount Crichton, St. Peter's Church, Eaton Square, London

⁵⁴ *The Queen*, 1902, p.190

The rise in the use of the press by these families was contemporaneous with another change in the patterns of elite alliances: a rising divorce rate. David Fitzpatrick has seen a connection between the two, stating in his examination of Irish divorce that ‘the desire for divorce is... more likely to arise in societies where love or personal involvement are considered appropriate, or even essential, grounds for marriage.’⁵⁵ During this period, as an affectionate pre-marital relationship became the expectation within aristocratic marriages, so divorce became increasingly common across the social spectrum, and the aristocracy began to experience this change in the permanency of marriage between 1870 and 1925.

Within the twelve aristocratic families under examination in this study, only one divorce occurred within the immediate families before the 1920s: in 1883 the marriage of the 8th duke of Marlborough and his wife (formerly Lady Albertha Hamilton, youngest daughter of the 1st duke of Abercorn, who retained her title of marchioness of Blandford throughout her life) was dissolved. In the next generation, however, there were thirteen divorces. Three of these divorces occurred before 1925: Lady Eleanor (née Dawson) was divorced from Aubrey Wade-Palmer, her husband of fourteen years, in 1920; in the same year Olive Leslie Stirling (formerly Guthrie) severed her second marriage, to John Stirling, after six years. Constance Annesley Malleson was divorced from her actor husband, Miles, in 1924, after nine years of marriage.

The rate of divorce for the aristocracy was small during this period: fewer than 5% of the marriages contracted during the fifty-five years of this study ended in divorce. However, the emotional effect of this change could already be seen by the 1920s: writing in 1922, Lord Ernest Hamilton romanticised the longevity of the union of his sister Lady Louisa, duchess of Buccleuch, and her husband, the 6th duke. ‘In these days,’ he wrote, ‘when married life is so often a short farce and a quick tragedy, it is good to reflect on the unwavering affection, through 50 odd years of married life, of these two.’⁵⁶ It is true that aristocratic ideals of marital permanence had begun to change by the 1920s, certainly among those peers who travelled in more bohemian circles, like Lady Constance Annesley, who granted Miles Malleson a divorce in 1924 with apparent equanimity.⁵⁷ The rise in the divorce rates in the

⁵⁵ David Fitzpatrick, ‘Divorce and separation in modern Irish history’, *Past and Present*, no. 114 (Feb. 1987), p.184

⁵⁶ Hamilton, *Forty Years On*, p.157

⁵⁷ Lady Constance Malleson, *After Ten Years* (London, 1931), p.67

1920s and 1930s not only came at the same time as waning church-attendance, a minor sexual revolution, and the rise of a feminised work-force,⁵⁸ but it also seems to have been contemporaneous with the decline of aristocratic political power. This link, while not direct, highlights the fact that during this period the well-oiled marital and political mechanisms that had supported the British and Irish oligarchy during the nineteenth century were becoming increasingly out of date. As the landed classes lost their political pre-eminence, the bonds of kinship that had supported the members of aristocracy when in government or in opposition were also dissolving: when political survival no longer depended on marital alliances, those alliances could more easily be disbanded.

By marrying primarily into the British elite, and by residing in part in Britain, the aristocracy of Ulster removed themselves into a different sphere, at least where the legalities of divorce were concerned: while the English Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 was never extended to Ireland,⁵⁹ this did not have an affect on the marriages dissolved within these families in the years between 1870 and 1925, as the English domiciles of the couples who petitioned for divorce placed them within English jurisdiction. Before the mid-nineteenth century, divorce was expensive and immensely complicated, involving civil and ecclesiastical courts, as well as requiring a private Act of Parliament. This costly and complex system rendered divorce inaccessible for all but the most socially exalted, or the most desperate. Griselda Rowntree and Norman Carrier have approximated the cost of an undefended divorce in 1850 as between £700 and £800.⁶⁰ In 1857 the Matrimonial Causes Act removed the legal complications of divorce in Great Britain: petitions for divorce were submitted to a specially designated section of the High Court. Divorce was offered on the same grounds as before the Act: a marriage could be annulled on the grounds of affinity or due to mental incapacity, while a marriage could be dissolved on the petition of a husband due to his wife's adultery, or on a wife's petition against an adulterous husband who had also subjected her to cruelty or desertion. The 1923 Matrimonial Causes Act introduced a measure of equality for husbands and wives: wives could now petition for divorce solely on the grounds of their spouses' adultery.

⁵⁸ Lawrence Stone, *Road to Divorce: England 1530-1987* (Oxford, 1992), p.396

⁵⁹ Fitzpatrick, 'Divorce and separation', pp. 172-96

⁶⁰ Norman H. Carrier and Griselda Rowntree, 'The resort to divorce in England and Wales, 1858-1957', *Population Studies*, vol. 11, no. 3 (Mar. 1958), p.192

A more common nineteenth-century solution for the unhappy marriages of aristocrats was separation, either legal, which involved a settlement organised by solicitors, or unofficial. According to David Fitzpatrick, 'If divorce was scarcely known in Ireland, separation in its many guises was ubiquitous... Many Irish marriages, both new and old, were endurable precisely because spouses spent their days in the company of others, their nights alone.'⁶¹ Married couples of all classes were able to continue in unsatisfactory marriages because the social expectation was both that they would continue to do so, and that they were not required to dedicate their time to each other. This was simplified further for the wealthy elite: the patterns of almost nomadic living of the aristocracy allowed those peers who held multiple residences to arrange to live away from their spouses without having to resort to the interference of solicitors. Consuelo Churchill (née Vanderbilt), wife of the 9th duke of Marlborough, and the daughter-in-law of the marchioness of Blandford, recognised this pattern within the aristocracy of the time, likely no less because she and her husband would also later divorce. 'Husbands and wives who could not get on together went their separate ways,' she wrote in her autobiography, 'and in the great houses in which they lived practised a polite observance of the deference each owed the other.'⁶²

Legal separation was the solution for George Annesley (brother of the 4th and 5th earls Annesley), and his second wife, Georgina, although this was seen by the family as 'the last resort'.⁶³ Within Ireland, this literally was their last resort: the residence of the George Annesleys in County Down would have required a Parliamentary Act for them to secure a divorce, a step they were unable to afford, while an English-domiciled couple at the same time could have divorced more easily and more economically through the courts. The couple arranged a separation just before Georgina gave birth to a daughter whose parentage was under question because of the mother's suspected infidelity.⁶⁴ Despite this, George Annesley accepted the daughter as his heiress.⁶⁵ Under the terms of the separation, Georgina was given an allowance of £400 annually, with which she was expected to support herself.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Fitzpatrick, 'Divorce and separation', p.174, 180

⁶² Consuelo Vanderbilt Churchill, *The Glitter and the Gold* (London, 1953), p.148

⁶³ PRONI, Annesley Papers, D/1503/3/20/1. George Wallace, solicitor, to the countess Annesley, 4 August 1862

⁶⁴ PRONI, Annesley Papers, D/1503/3/20/3. Georgiana Annesley to her mother, Mrs. Daniel, 1864

⁶⁵ PRONI, Annesley Papers, D/1503/3/20/4. Birth certificate of Josephine Annesley, 1864

⁶⁶ PRONI, Annesley Papers, D/1503/3/20/5. George Wallace to George Annesley, 15, 17 September 1864

Despite the rarity of divorce in the late nineteenth century among the elite, the 1883 divorce of the marchioness of Blandford from her husband (who in that year inherited the title of duke of Marlborough from his late father) is reflective of a number of changes in divorce proceedings in the later nineteenth century. Crucially, after the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857, which transferred the legal control of marriage from the Church to the civil courts, divorce became more accessible and more affordable. The divorce of the couple in 1883 was the result of nearly a decade of scandal and separation: the adultery of Lord Blandford with Lady Aylesford had become a public scandal in the mid-1870s that involved the Prince of Wales and Lord Blandford's brother, the politician Lord Randolph Churchill. Lady Albertha's petition for divorce was based on this liaison, and was supported by the Marquess' very public attempt in 1874 to elope to Paris with his lover, creating a charge of adultery and attempted abandonment.⁶⁷ The case was also reflective of a change in the years after 1857: nearly half of all petitioners were now wives.⁶⁸

The Blandford divorce also demonstrates further changes in the law and in attitudes of the public to the dissolution of marriages at this time: the alteration of the awarding of custody rights, and the treatment of divorcées within Society. The marquess and marchioness of Blandford had been married in 1869, and had four children, the youngest of whom had been born only a month before the scandal broke. Under the ruling of the 1873 Custody of Infants Act, Lady Albertha was granted primary custody of all of the children. Had the Blandford divorce been executed in Ireland under an Act of Parliament, this would not have been the case; in the absence of a Custody of Infants Act in Ireland, custody was granted to the father except in exceptional circumstances of evident cruelty or mental instability.⁶⁹ Additionally, Lady Albertha does not seem to have been shunned after her divorce; in fact, she carried on using the title of marchioness of Blandford and attending house parties and Society gatherings. Although during this period some sources have attested that the common attitude in Ireland, and among some peers in Britain, was that a woman separated from her husband was morally suspect, this view does not seem to have been widespread.⁷⁰ Rowntree

⁶⁷ Anita Leslie, *The Marlborough House Set* (London, 1973), p.59

⁶⁸ Carrier and Rowntree, 'The resort to divorce', p.190; Stone, *Road to Divorce*, p.385

⁶⁹ Fitzpatrick, 'Divorce and separation', p.175

⁷⁰ The evidence of Arthur Samuels, as quoted by Fitzpatrick, states that among the Irish populace in general, 'if a wife lives apart from her husband she is looked upon as a disgraced woman'. In the 1860s, Lady Minto wrote to her son, Viscount Melgund, with a warning about spending time in the company of a well-born, but recently separated, woman at a country house party: 'The fact of a lady being separated from

and Carrier have documented a growing acceptance of divorce even within the press by the 1880s, and this likely reflected the attitudes of the public in general.⁷¹ By the 1890s, Lady Blandford was a regular feature at the house parties thrown by her brother, the 2nd duke of Abercorn, at Baronscourt, and at Society weddings.⁷² This may be in part due to her impeccable connections through her family to the Crown and the highest levels of aristocratic Society, but is also reflective of gradually changing attitudes to divorce and divorcées among the elite.

When the separation or divorce of an aristocratic couple had to be negotiated officially, rather than unofficially, it almost invariably called for the involvement of the family members of both parties. In the case of George and Georgina Annesley, letters act as a testament to the involvement of the 3rd earl Annesley and his mother, the dowager countess, a selection of lawyers and friends, and Georgina's mother, who even managed to secure a temporary promise of reconciliation from her daughter.⁷³ In the case of the Blandford divorce, the financial negotiation seems to have primarily fallen to the bride's brother, later the 2nd duke of Abercorn, who secured for his sister a voluntary annuity of nearly £1000 from the marquess of Blandford in the years preceding their divorce.⁷⁴ Rowntree and Carrier have also remarked on the effect changes in the financial portfolio of the aristocracy from the 1880s onward may have had on divorce rates during this time. As the income of the aristocracy was gradually transferred from solely landed, to more mixed, sources, the division of assets, or 'unscrambling [of] the settlement', was eased, allowing the division of elite properties to be achieved without eroding the landed patrimonies of these families.⁷⁵

Although divorce was a rarity for couples from these families up to 1925, the increased use of legal means of severing ties of marriage demonstrates that the Ulster aristocracy was

her husband never tells in her favour.' However, the question about the morals of the divorced woman does not seem to have actually translated to treatment in daily life for these families: either the circumstances were considered exceptional, or the very elite nature of Ulster's aristocratic society absolved Lady Blandford, allowing her to participate actively in Society. Fitzpatrick, 'Divorce and separation', p.186; NLS, Minto Papers, 12367, f.49. Lady Minto to Viscount Melgund, 8 July 1864. Quoted in Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics*, p.26

⁷¹ Norman H. Carrier and Griselda Rowntree, 'The resort to divorce in England and Wales, 1858-1957', *Population Studies*, vol. 11, no. 3 (Mar. 1958), p.197

⁷² PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/M/5/26. Lord Frederick Blackwood to Lady Hermione Blackwood, September 1907. *The Queen*, 2 July 1892, p.26

⁷³ PRONI, Annesley Papers, D/1503/3/20/2. Lady Georgina Annesley to her mother, Mrs. Daniel, August 1864; D/1503/3/20/1. George Wallace to the dowager countess Annesley, 4 August 1862

⁷⁴ PRONI, Abercorn Papers, D/623/A/336//2. Notes of 2nd duke of Abercorn, 7 May 1882

⁷⁵ Carrier and Rowntree, 'The resort to divorce', p.196

gradually taking advantage of the social and legal changes that made divorce possible. The aristocracy of Ulster seems to have been more reticent than those groups sampled by historians of family and divorce who observed a six-fold increase in divorce during the period between 1913 and 1921.⁷⁶ The aristocracy of Ulster did not embrace the changes made in divorce laws in the 1920s on a larger scale until the 1930s. Unhappiness within aristocratic unions had long been dealt with from within the marriage: infidelity, though not openly accepted within Society, was fairly normal, and the patterns of elite life facilitated the actual, if not the official, separation of husband and wife into different homes and different social circles. Family members, like the earl and dowager countess Annesley, worked with an unhappy married couple to make suitable arrangements that would offer husband and wife comfort without the need to dissolve the ties made by the marriage. Although the traditional social and political uses of aristocratic marriage had waned by the second decade of the twentieth century, aristocratic patterns of thought may not yet have recognised this, or seen it as permanent. In the early twentieth century the aristocracy in the north of Ireland still saw marriage as an extension of kinship and as a tool in strengthening the sense of elite community which was carefully fostered during this period: the severance of these ties remained a drastic measure and a last resort.

Historians have long recognised the flexibility of the British ruling classes during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and their ability to adapt to the changing world around them: to bend, but not to break.⁷⁷ The interest of the landed classes during their ascendancy was one that encouraged a long-term outlook, subordinating all interests to the survival of the family and creed over the pleasures of the individual, and thereby ensuring the continuance of aristocratic lineage, even in the face of political, social, or economic threat.⁷⁸ The introduction of capital to flagging aristocratic fortunes through marriage alliances with the families of foreign and British industrialists during the late nineteenth century was a part of this flexibility. As has been discussed, the events and rules of the Season (and elite Society in

⁷⁶ Carrier and Rowntree have recognised that while the years that followed the Second World War had a greater effect on the rise of divorce rates, the interwar years and the legislative and financial changes that occurred in the wake of the First World War were still pivotal for altering both the accessibility and the acceptance of divorce. Petitions for divorce in the High Court in London climbed from a total of 919 in the years between 1910 and 1913 to 3,150 between 1920 and 1924. Stone, *Road to Divorce*, p.394; Carrier and Rowntree, 'The resort to divorce', pp.199, 210; Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England, 1918-1951* (Oxford, 1998), p.303

⁷⁷ Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, p.15

⁷⁸ Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (London, 1992), p.162

general) had developed in such a way that while intermarriage rehabilitated the finances and genetic pool of the aristocracy, absorbing the *nouveau riche* into the existing system, it was done in a way that was least likely to disturb the existing oligarchy.⁷⁹ Social patterns (such as the absorption of foreign and non-landed families into the peerage through marriage) that offered the aristocracy hope for their crumbling patrimonies in the late nineteenth century offered a short-term adaptation to social and economic changes, allowing some aristocratic families assistance in retaining their properties and pre-eminence into the inter-war years. The contemporary rise of divorce within this sample of families also altered the base on which elite marriage had been constructed for generations, acrimoniously severing carefully constructed ties of kinship, which were at the same time more easily cut due to the increasingly varied financial portfolios of these families.

Ultimately, the years between 1870 and 1925 formed a key period during which the patterns of aristocratic marriage were altered. During this time the aristocracy experienced losses of political and economic power, and these changes were reflected in the marital alliances they made. At the same time, changes within the aristocracy began to alter ideas of marital discretion and permanency, and in the spheres from which aristocrats from the north of Ireland selected their spouses. Contemporaneously, the rise of the printed media, and the increased interest of the middle and upper classes in the perceived ‘glamour’ of elite marriages offered the aristocracy a new opportunity for self-promotion which would help pave the way for their future roles as social and sartorial leaders. In this way, the marriage networks of the aristocracy were both reflective of, and gradually began to further and influence, the wider changes in landowning society during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These elite leaders, who held influence in political and economic spheres into the twentieth century, were able to use the functions of aristocratic Society and marriage as a way to support and stabilise the fluctuations of money, politics, and power experienced by the aristocracy of Ireland during the tumultuous years between the 1870s and the 1920s. As the nineteenth century progressed toward the twentieth, economically burdened aristocrats increasingly turned to the new, wealthy, plutocratic classes for marriage alliances, endeavouring to support their lifestyle of conspicuous consumption with outside money. The rise of trans-Atlantic marriages was the primary change in the first decades of the twentieth

⁷⁹ Davidoff, et. al., *The Family Story*, p.115

century, but the increase in the divorce rate was furthered in the years after the Great War, and the aristocratic social world became increasingly fluid as a result.

THREE

ELITE CHILDREARING IN THE NORTH OF IRELAND AND THE CREATION OF THE ARISTOCRATIC COMMUNITY

The childrearing patterns of the elite in the north of Ireland were crucial for encouraging the sense of community that united Britain and Ireland's elite during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The education of very young children within the country house instilled the principles of rural family life into the aristocracy, while the training of young women during the Season, and young men at public school and University emphasised the shared priorities of the landed classes from across the United Kingdom. This chapter will look at how some of principles that defined the lives of adult aristocrats, such as notions of duty and ancestry, conceptions of taste, and ideas about kinship and the aristocratic family, were transmitted to children, and how their educations reflected the preoccupations of the aristocratic community as a whole. The goal of this chapter is to demonstrate how the continuity of aristocratic education from infancy to adulthood encouraged a set of principles that supported landed life and elite culture over numerous generations, especially in supporting an integrated idea of an elite community which encompassed the landed classes from across the United Kingdom. Changes to established landed patterns were less significant in the rearing and education of aristocratic children in the north of Ireland than in other areas of this group's cultural life. However, some small alterations to this structure in the twentieth century are apparent, and were successful in adapting the patterns of landed family life, even as the system in its entirety was rendered increasingly anachronistic. More crucially, the childrearing patterns of these families have not been studied in the past, and these important opportunities for the formation of the principles of elite life have gone unexamined by historians in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Overwhelmingly, these

families exerted themselves, sometimes at great cost and inconvenience, to give their children a British, rather than an Irish, education, a point that cannot be ignored within the wider cultural analysis of this group. The shared supra-national nature of landed community of the elite was a central pillar of their culture, and this was accordingly nurtured in subsequent generations.

There are aspects of children's education that are not treated within this chapter, due both to limitations of space and in order to preserve the analytical focus of the work. Throughout the thesis, the intention has been to let the source material guide the scope and depth of the analysis, and on some topics, the records of Ulster's aristocracy have not been forthcoming. Foremost among these exclusions is the topic of religion, which is not examined here. The role of religion and the place of the Anglican faith of these families within their culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is vast and complex—too vast, in fact, to be properly examined in tandem with the topics analysed within this thesis. For the specific purposes of this analysis, it is important to recognise that the aristocracy of the north of Ireland was overwhelmingly a Protestant community, and that this Protestantism worked to ally these families with their elite kin from across the British Isles. In inculcating morality, instilling ideas about gender, and encouraging relationships with their peers, these families did not differ significantly from their Protestant cousins across the United Kingdom. The goal of the aristocratic education was to instil in elite offspring the importance of this community, created around shared, understood principles of taste, community, and a collective conception of inherited rights and responsibilities. Most crucially, however, and surprisingly within the context of the social and political upheavals of this period, religion played only a limited part in the correspondence, diaries, and published materials of these families. Exceptions certainly exist to this: Shane Leslie was a famous convert to Catholicism, and this was reflected in the way in which he and his wife choose to educate their children. Overwhelmingly, though, this is the exception that proves the rule: where Leslie is ebullient about his religious convictions in the 1910s, his counterparts both within his own family and in the families of his neighbours are more reticent, and there is little active discussion of religion in reference to the upbringing of children.

On the other hand, some topics have been left out of the scope of this chapter intentionally, despite interesting and in-depth records for these families. The question of

servants, and the important role they played within the upbringing of children is only introduced here. This is primarily discussed within the context of how interaction with the staff of the elite home trained into young men and women ideas about their place within the hierarchy of the country estate or metropolitan house. The early introduction to the distinctions that would colour their future lives was crucial to the development of the aristocrat, and is outlined briefly here. However, the intention of this chapter is not to examine the reciprocal relationship between the children and their caretakers. While the attitudes of the staff to their young charges on the Ulster estates of the aristocracy would provide an interesting study, the intention here is to examine how these relationships shaped the young aristocrats, how they affected their early development within the nursery and on the estate, and how ideas about hierarchy coloured their culture in their later lives.

Ideas of aristocratic community and the bond of kinship were the most important concepts of the aristocratic education and as such were furthered during childhood through a variety of methods. The naming of children, the exposure of young men and women to a consistent picture of aristocratic taste within homes and on estates across Ireland and Britain, and the emphasis on the delineations of kinship and status within these homes served to clarify in the child's mind questions about place, as well as about personal and collective identity. If the emphasis of early aristocratic education in Ulster was on nursery life, there was only a very gradual change between this existence and the educations of young women from these families: for many girls the 'nursery' simply became the 'schoolroom'. The rigour and value of the education of upper class girls has been called into question since the early nineteenth century, and the education of the daughters of this group of families is characterised by two qualities: variety, and self-guidance. A growing minority of these young women began to be educated away from the home as the nineteenth century became the twentieth, however, and this experience—whether at a boarding school in Britain or a finishing school on the Continent—had a marked effect on the patterns of these women's lives. Overwhelmingly, however, these young women were exposed to the principles that would be expected to guide their adult lives. Chief among these were ideas about femininity, which were clearly expressed in the expected dress and behaviour of the adolescent aristocrat. These teachings were eventually put to the test during the debut of the young aristocrat during the London Season, when overnight the girl was expected to transform into

a young woman, and became her family's representative within the social world of the aristocratic community.

The education of boys was distinct from that of their sisters after the age of approximately eight, when most boys left home for preparatory school. While the instillation of gender boundaries is clear in these patterns of education, the separateness of the school environment for young men has been over-stressed in much literature: the boarding school, and much as the country house schoolroom, was a place where the priorities of the elite community were taught to the future leaders of the nation. The established academic curriculum of these schools, which was largely based around the Classics, with an increased provision for those young men who would be expected to demonstrate practical and professional knowledge on entrance to the professions or armed forces, was only a part of the education of the public school student. More important was the daily reminder of the long chain of aristocratic ancestors and descendants with whom they shared the schooling experience, and this idea was supported by the legacies established by many of Ulster's elite families at particular schools. Isolation from family life is also contradicted by the close proximity of the best schools to London and the home counties: family contact through weekend visits was regular, and boys were expected to write to their families, beginning the social correspondence of letters which would be expected to continue throughout their adult lives. Additionally, the complex system of rules at the public schools helped express the hierarchy of students within the school, and prepared young men for the intricacies of elite Society both in the countryside and in London.

For some young men, their entrance to Society was postponed for a few years beyond leaving school by entrance to University, which, for these families, invariably meant Oxford or Cambridge. While aristocratic women graduated at about age eighteen from the schoolroom to the ballroom, elite men were generally older when they entered Society. This was intentional: the expectation of any member of the elite entering Society was that they would now function as an adult, and for the aristocracy, this generally meant marrying and beginning a family. Women were deemed ready for this role in their late teenaged years; young men were not considered capable of shouldering the responsibilities of family life until they were in their early twenties. For those young men who attended university, then, these years served to solidify the training they had received at public school within a similar group

of their peers, while gradually integrating them into the world of the aristocratic community as it was represented by the London Season.

Ideas of aristocratic community and the bond of kinship were the most important concepts of the aristocratic education and as such were furthered during childhood through a variety of methods, none more clear than through the naming of children. Discussion about the names of unborn children are central in the correspondence of the Belmore family in the 1870s, the Londonderrys in the 1910s, and in the diary of Norah, countess of Kilmorey, in the 1920s. For the aristocracy, the name constituted a large part of personal and familial self, and in living up to the expectations of an ancestral name there were many hurdles for boys and girls to jump. Traditionally, a baby's names included those of a godparent or of a parent or grandparent. The Gladstone sisters of Honoria, countess of Belmore, were able to guess the eventual name of the son who was born to the Belmores in 1870: he was named squarely within family tradition, and became Armar Lowry-Corry (later 5th earl of Belmore), after his grandfather, the 3rd earl of Belmore.¹ As the emphasis on family names became less marked in the twentieth century, the question of the name presented a problem for Lord and Lady Castlereagh, in part because of the previous existence of aristocratic customs for naming, and additionally because of the participation and advice of various additional members of the family. In the case of the baby who would eventually become Lady Margaret Stewart, neither mother nor grandmother liked any of the family names, including their own, while father wanted to christen the baby with the unprecedented 'Janet', a name detested by Lady Castlereagh and the marchioness of Londonderry.² Young Robin Stewart (the baby's elder brother, and later 8th marquess of Londonderry, who had been named Robert for his grand predecessor, Lord Castlereagh) insisted that he would call the baby 'Annie', regardless of the outcome of the christening.³ As the twentieth century progressed, the naming of the child was still based in many ways on family tradition, but was also increasingly coloured by other interests. In 1921 the first child of the 4th earl and countess of Kilmorey was christened

¹ PRONI, Belmore Papers, D/3007/I/4. Clara Gladstone to the countess of Belmore, n.d.

² DCRO, Londonderry Papers, D/Lo/C 683. Edith, countess Castlereagh, to Theresa, marchioness of Londonderry, 8 April 1910

³ DCRO, Londonderry Papers, D/Lo/C 683. Edith, countess Castlereagh, to Theresa, marchioness of Londonderry, 7 April, 1910

Eleanor Patricia, a tribute to her grandmother, the late countess of Kilmorey, and to the Earl's first sailing boat.⁴

The cultivation of taste and a shared visual culture was an important aspect of the aristocratic education, and one that encouraged the development of a cohesive material culture among the elite across the United Kingdom. Young men and women brought up among the treasures of the United Kingdom's great country houses were tutored from an early age in the appreciation of their material and environmental heritage. Pierre Bourdieu has argued that cultural and aesthetic taste, as reflected in artistic and literary preferences, depends primarily on the educational and socio-economic background of the viewer.⁵ This was certainly a factor in the formation of aristocratic taste in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: aristocratic children began their education in art appreciation and ancestry at birth, and this continued throughout their youth in the country house. Primarily, this early training in the characteristics of elite taste was passive, and children in the country home absorbed their understanding of the principles and requirements of art and culture through their experiences with the collections that were housed in their vast homes. Within their formal schooling, artistic appreciation formed a limited part of the schedule for young women, and had almost no place in the established academic curriculum of the public school.⁶ Yet within the rarefied halls of Eton and Harrow, the young men of the aristocracy experienced at least part of their lives within the established cultural terms: pre-Raphaelite-inspired trophies and the chivalric works of Tennyson emboldened young men on the sports field, while within the chapel the artistic and musical trends of the day were reflected in the stained glass and echoed in the songs of the choir.⁷

This is itself reflective of the cultural emphasis at work in the aristocratic upbringing: Bourdieu has asserted that it is a particular feature of upper- and select middle-class educational establishments that children are exposed to the aesthetic training that will render them capable of instinctual cultural judgement and understanding.⁸ At Castle Leslie, which was filled with a collection of Italian and pre-Raphaelite art, the dining room held family

⁴ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/D/76/1. Diary of Norah, countess of Kilmorey, February 1921

⁵ Kenneth McConkey, *Memory and Desire* (Aldershot, 2002), p.22; Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Translated by Richard Nice (London, 1984), p.133

⁶ Rupert Wilkinson, *The Prefects: British Leadership and the Public School Tradition* (London, 1964), p.67

⁷ Wilkinson, *The Prefects*, p.100; Mark Girouard, *The Return To Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven, 1981), pp.7,175

⁸ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p.133

portraits. This material record of centuries of family taste and achievement became as much a daily part of the lives of the Leslie children, who lunched in the dining room, as for their elders, who dined twice daily under the gaze of their antecedents.⁹ According to Bourdieu, the daily exposure of the upper classes from a young age to the more established realms of culture resulted in what he refers to as an ‘ease or cultivated naturalness’, demonstrated by the elite when faced with cultural artefacts with which they are unfamiliar, but which exhibit aesthetic patterns that have been made familiar through exposure and education.¹⁰ Children raised in aristocratic British and Irish families during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were continually exposed to what their parents and grandparents had decided (and been taught) was aesthetically valuable, and because of this education, they were able to further these patterns of judgement and cultural control within their own lives.

Key within this concept of the aristocratic community was the idea of the family, and the circuit of kinship to which children were introduced at a very early age. For many aristocratic families, the isolation of the country house and aristocratic nursery was minimised by the wide family circle in which many children found themselves raised, and this was an important tool in establishing a familial context in which young aristocrats would operate. The ‘much inflated’ family circle of the 1st duke and duchess of Abercorn is an exceptional, though very clear, example of the wide network of kinship in which young aristocrats were often reared.¹¹ Ernest Hamilton was the youngest of the thirteen Abercorn siblings: he was, in fact, twenty-four years the junior of his eldest sister. By the time of his birth, four of his sisters were already married, and he and his brother Frederick were partly raised within a circle of thirty-nine young cousins, who often travelled in a group between the homes of their respective parents. Between the cross-generational group of children no questions of ‘uncles’ versus ‘nieces and nephews’ came into play: all of the cousins were raised as within an enormous group of brothers and sisters.¹² This exceptional situation illustrates the wider principles at work within elite society: by this method of a shared upbringing the aristocracy encouraged its young members to understand their mutual family bond, and thereby further cemented the ancestral loyalty that was key for promoting the stability of the landed classes.

⁹ Anita Leslie, *The Gilt and the Gingerbread* (London, 1981), pp.15, 36

¹⁰ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p.139

¹¹ Hamilton, *The Halcyon Era: A Rambling Reverie of Now and Then* (London, 1933), p.81

¹² Hamilton, *Forty Years On* (London, 1922), p.78

The bond between siblings often also helped to forge a community within the aristocratic family, who would explore the estate and country house together, and during absences, keep each other informed by letter. The sibling relationship was an important one for children raised in the country house, where remote location often prevented frequent interaction with other playmates. This was certainly true of Ernest and Frederick Hamilton, who discovered the lakes of Baronscourt together in an ancient boat,¹³ and Shane and Norman Leslie, who wrote continuously to each other about cricket tournaments, shooting, horse breeding, and hunting when apart.¹⁴ The Annesley children learned to ride as soon as they were able to walk, accompanied by their groom.¹⁵ While due to their father's diplomatic career the Blackwood children spent comparatively less time at their Irish country home as children than young aristocrats in other families, they still shared with their peers a passion for the natural world.¹⁶

Despite the important role played by nurses, nannies, governesses, and gamekeepers in the lives of these children, for the vast majority of aristocrats, the principal connection as young children was to their parents, regardless of how infrequently they were seen. Lord Ernest Hamilton was cared for throughout his childhood by nannies he remembered with fondness, but in old age insisted that it was his parents who received the majority of his love: 'From the very first my father and mother stand out from the screen of life as old people, but as old people who overshadowed all competitors as objects of adoration.'¹⁷ It must be recognised that there may have been social expectations about how adult aristocrats viewed their upbringings, and while some twentieth century memoir writers admitted to casual neglect by their parents in their early lives, most were very ready to praise the affectionate relationship shared between parent and child.¹⁸ Whether parents were attentive or not, most aristocrats from this sample grew up to see them as such, thereby revealing that regardless of the variety of experience for young children in their early lives, their educations had been

¹³ Hamilton, *Forty Years On*, p.35

¹⁴ PRONI, Leslie Papers, MIC/606/M/1/5/1-2. Norman Leslie to Shane Leslie, n.d.; PRONI, Leslie Papers, MIC/606/M/1/1/1. Sir John Leslie, 2nd Baronet to John (Shane) Leslie, later 3rd Baronet, n.d.

¹⁵ PRONI, Annesley Papers, T/3774/8. Castlewellan photo album, c. 1890

¹⁶ PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/H/1/1. 1st Marquess of Dufferin and Ava to Archibald, Earl of Ava, 1873; PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/M/5/3. Lady Victoria Blackwood to Lady Hermione Blackwood, n.d.

¹⁷ Hamilton, *Forty Years On*, p.11

¹⁸ See, for example, the memoirs of Anita Leslie and Constance Malleeson, who were ready to admit the inherent distance in the relationship of aristocratic parent and child, as compared to the works of peers like the Hamiltons on their early years.

successful in training them into a mentality in which they were ready to assign affection to their parents, thereby strengthening and preserving the concept of the community of aristocratic kinship.

In general, aristocratic parents in the north of Ireland seem to have been, if not always the most visible influences in their children's lives, the most important. The frequency with which children were able to see their parents varied not only between families, but also throughout the year, as political and social obligations dictated. The idealised vision of maternity so characteristic of nineteenth century family philosophy was only applicable to aristocratic women when childcare did not interrupt their other duties.¹⁹ For many mothers, though duty required them to spend periods away from their children, their affection for their offspring remained foremost in their minds, continuing into old age.²⁰ Edith, Lady Castlereagh, anticipated the wrench she would feel after the birth of her third child, writing to her mother-in-law, the marchioness of Londonderry: 'I shall be so sorry to leave the baby or for it to leave me, I think I appreciate her more than I did the others, the seven years waiting, I suppose!'²¹ Earlier, when Charles, Lord Castlereagh (later 7th marquess of Londonderry) and Lady Edith had toured India and the East, leaving their two young children behind, Lady Castlereagh wrote her daughter adoring letters, accompanied by presents and postcards. During this time the two children stayed at Wynyard, the Londonderry seat in county Durham, in the care of their nanny, and Edith encouraged both young Lady Maureen and the nurse to write to her of the children's activities daily.²² Ten years later at Castle Leslie, the tradition was that while the gentlemen would breakfast downstairs, the ladies would have their breakfast in bed and would be visited by the children during this time.²³ Luncheon offered young Leslies another opportunity to see their parents in the dining room, though from the distance of a separate children's table.²⁴ These children, though cared for primarily by nannies and nurses, were frequently in contact with their parents and grandparents, solidifying their concept of family.

¹⁹ Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles: Society Etiquette and the Season* (London, 1973), p.53; Gerard, *Country House Life: Family and Servants, 1815-1914* (Oxford, 1994), p.67

²⁰ PRONI, Abercorn Papers, D/623/A/44,54. Dowager duchess of Abercorn to her son, the 2nd duke

²¹ DCRO, Londonderry Papers, D/Lo/C 683. Edith, countess Castlereagh, to Theresa, marchioness of Londonderry, 13 April 1910

²² DCRO, Londonderry Papers, D/Lo/C 683. Edith, countess Castlereagh, to Theresa, marchioness of Londonderry, n.d.

²³ Leslie, *The Gilt and the Gingerbread*, p.17

²⁴ *ibid.*, p.36

Other parents, even in the face of travel and great social responsibilities, were more involved in the day-to-day raising of their children: Hariot, marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, kept a detailed diary of her children's activities while the family was in Canada during the Marquess' time as Governor-General. The journal describes afternoons spent supervising lessons, preparing amateur dramatics, and playing music with the children.²⁵ The Marchioness' involvement did not decline as her children grew up, although her social and official duties as the wife of the Ambassador to Russia, Turkey, Italy, and France, and as Vicereine of India necessarily took up a great deal of her time. Despite this, she still revelled in the time she spent with her children, writing joyfully to her daughter Hermione about their activities and education for one summer, which she would be supervising herself.²⁶ The Blackwoods managed to retain the services of their governess, Miss Sutcliffe, for a number of years, and she provided much of their daily care throughout their childhoods. But despite their attachment to their governess, the bulk of the Blackwood children's affection seems to have been for their mother and father, and in this they were characteristic of their class.

All parents were enabled or limited in their abilities to interact with their children by personality, distance, or professional constraints, and the record of paternal experience is therefore varied. The advice of the 3rd earl of Kilmorey to his son was particularly minute, but also displays the humour that seemed to have characterised their relationship. 'Remember your teeth and your nails,' he wrote eccentrically to his son in 1893, 'for on their appearance a great deal depends next holidays.'²⁷ Other fathers, like Shane Leslie, were remote because of their uneasiness with young children, though they became more involved as their children grew older. Marjorie Leslie (née Ide), though far more affectionate a parent than her husband, still had no idea how to dress her seven-year-old daughter when she was required to attire Anita for her first communion. Much of the attention and care lavished on these young Leslies came from their grandparents.²⁸ The 8th duke of Marlborough, the divorced husband of Albertha, marchioness of Blandford (née Hamilton), was remembered by his son, Charles

²⁵ PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/G/13/3. Diary account of the Blackwood children in Canada, by Hariot, marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, 1872-8

²⁶ PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/M/2/2. Hariot, marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, to Lady Hermione Blackwood, 21 June

²⁷ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/D/73/1-5. 3rd earl of Kilmorey to Lord Newry, 3 November 1893

²⁸ Leslie, *The Gilt and the Gingerbread*, pp.45,133

(later 9th duke of Marlborough), as having ‘never spoke a kind word’ to him, and the young Lord Charles was primarily raised by his mother and within the context of public school.²⁹

In some cases, remarriage and the establishment of a second family when the father figure was already in middle age also occasioned a greater distance: the Annesley family albums of the 1880s show Hugh, 5th earl Annesley, with his two elder children and first wife, Mabel, countess Annesley. The photographs feature not only the young family together, but also include a number of the natal relatives of Lady Mabel, and provide an engaging picture of Annesley family life during this time.³⁰ As their daughter, Lady Mabel Annesley, remembered of her father after his second marriage: ‘My father sometimes took me for a ride. He was reserved and gloomy, but I was not frightened of him... Mentally and emotionally he asked nothing of me.’³¹ The childhood of the 5th earl’s two younger children seems to have been coloured by this reserve and by changes experienced by Lord Annesley himself due to age, infirmity, and financial pressure, as well as by the unhappy relationship between the earl and his second wife, Lady Priscilla.³²

Young aristocrats spent a great deal of their early lives out of doors, both with and without adult company. The emphasis on outdoor play and on interaction with the estate through games and pets formed a key element of the lives of the young aristocrats of Ulster, as is evidenced in family letters, memoirs, and photographs. The children of the 4th earl of Enniskillen were particularly dedicated to what seems to have been a small army of lambs, guinea pigs, dogs, cats, fawns, and horses, who were immortalised in the family albums,³³ and these devoted pet-owners were in turn interested in instilling the same ideas in their children. During the Great War, Lord Cole (later 5th earl of Enniskillen) remained informed about his daughter, Ann Florence’s tutelage in the equestrian arts, and while she began her riding on a farm donkey, he was already enquiring about a pony for her from the trenches on the Western Front.³⁴ Responsibility for, and love of, pets was evident in the Blackwood family, as well, and was certainly encouraged by the 1st marquess of Dufferin, who sent young Archibald, Lord Ava, a Scotch terrier puppy as a birthday present while he was at

²⁹ *ibid.*, p.43

³⁰ PRONI, Annesley Papers, T/3774/4/3. Family photograph album, 1884

³¹ Mabel M. Annesley, *As the Sight is Bent*, edited by Constance Malleson (London, 1964)

³² Lady Constance Malleson, *After Ten Years* (London, 1931), pp.27-33

³³ PRONI, Enniskillen Papers, D/1702/11/5. Family photograph album, 1894-1940

³⁴ PRONI, Enniskillen Papers, D/1702/12/50/15, Lord Cole to the earl and countess of Enniskillen, c. 1914-1918

school.³⁵ Years later, his sister, Lady Victoria Blackwood, enlisted the assistance of her older sister Lady Hermione to help her convince her mother to let her keep the stray dog she had found.³⁶ In Anita Leslie's estimation, the outdoor tutelage received by the young aristocrats at the hands of their mentors was considered more important than the academic training they had in the schoolroom, and the bond established with the gamekeepers over a shared enthusiasm for dogs, horses, and the estate was more potent than the connection made with the governesses employed to drill them in mathematics and languages.³⁷

Aristocratic children spent the majority of the day in the nursery, guided by a strict timetable. The nursery tended to be remote from the rest of the home: for young Lords Frederick and Ernest Hamilton, while the Abercorn family was in London the two boys inhabited the small attic, 'bare of any luxury or even comfort', as all of the rooms in the main body of the house were occupied by the rest of the family.³⁸ At Baronscourt, the remoteness of the nursery was a key feature in the memories of its inhabitants, and contributed to the fears of Lord Frederick when he made his nightly progress from the children's quarters to see his parents: 'The most vivid impression that remains of my early childhood is the nightly ordeal of the journey down "The Passage of Many Terrors" in our Irish home. Never, surely, had such a prodigious length of twisting, winding passages and such a superfluity of staircases been crammed into one building.'³⁹ The comparison made by Lord Frederick between his journey from the nursery to that of Christian, hero of *Pilgrim's Progress*, is indicative of the role this text, referred to by Colley as 'canonical' and 'authentically British' had in the lives of the young Hamiltons, and in their peers.⁴⁰ The religious ideas within Bunyan's text seem to have been understood as inherent by these children; as they grew up, they examined neither the Protestant principles of the text, nor the patriotic implications of the allegorical role of the British hero's fight against the foreign evils of Papacy, Popery, and temptation. These were the foundations of their culture, but for most of these families, ideas

³⁵ PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/H/1/1. From the marquess of Dufferin and Ava to Archibald, earl of Ava, 1873

³⁶ PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/M/5/3. From Lady Victoria Blackwood to Lady Hermione Blackwood, n.d.

³⁷ Leslie, *The Gilt and the Gingerbread*, pp.12-3; Anita Leslie, *The Marlborough House Set* (London, 1973), pp.7,10

³⁸ Hamilton, *The Halcyon Era*, p.70

³⁹ Lord Frederick Hamilton, *The Days Before Yesterday* (London, 1920), p.5

⁴⁰ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven and London, 1992), p.28

of Protestantism and Britishness may have been too central to the very existence of their culture to be questioned.

An element of early education for the elite is expressed in their dress as small children, the intricacies of which are preserved in numerous photograph albums, in women's magazines (which often included recommendations on dress for the young, especially very small children and teenaged girls), and in surviving collections of elite clothes. The customary dress for all very young children, male and female, was a sort of sturdy skirted smock, worn (dependent on century) until between age five and age seven, and in Cumming's estimation, abandoned only when young men began their education away from their female siblings.⁴¹ For this group, representative of their class at the time in general, boys began to wear trousers or short trousers earlier than in previous centuries, generally around the age of five, years before they were sent away from home for outside education. The earlier introduction of gender differentiation within the nursery is indicative of the wider tendency of the Victorian and Edwardian aristocracy to emphasise gender distinctions through dress, although boys and girls were educated within the same spheres until the boys reached approximately eight years of age. Just as they were early introduced to the distinctions between their servants and themselves, they were presented at an early age with the distinctions of dress that would mark their sexed identities throughout their lives.

This differentiation would become more marked as children approached adolescence. The education of young women within the aristocratic home was structured around preparing girls for their future roles as wives and mothers, and as such, the instruction of the principles of 'femininity' coloured their educations from late childhood (around age eleven) onward. Aristocratic girls were educated at home, and were tutored in pursuits that would best suit their futures, such as ornamental hobbies, languages, literature, and politics. Some young women in these families, in increasing numbers as the nineteenth century became the twentieth, were exposed to formal education away from home, either at boarding or finishing schools, which offered a different sort of training to that which they would have received within the aristocratic home. While few of these women were able to take advantage of improved educational opportunities in the twentieth century, and none of them attended

⁴¹ Valerie Cumming, *Understanding Fashion History* (London, 2004), p.100

university, the increased attendance of young elite women at schools had an effect on the educational patterns of young women, and therefore on the aristocracy as a whole.

While many of the studies of Victorian and Edwardian feminine education have deplored the lack of interest shown by many aristocratic parents in the formal education of their daughters, it is wrong to assume that because academic advancement was not a priority for girls in the schoolroom, young women were never offered any intellectual training. As has been acknowledged by Deborah Gorham and by Jessica Gerard, what is most notable about feminine aristocratic education in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is not its inferiority, but its variety.⁴² In her memoirs, Anita Leslie primarily stressed the failure of the structure to offer young women systematic intellectual stimulation, reflecting on the education of the Edwardians as an 'idyllic equestrian non-intellectual routine' which began when the girls were old enough to walk, and continued until they debuted in London in their late teens. For Leslie, the women produced by this system were 'half-educated', but despite this apparent failure in early tutelage, 'became politically the most powerful women in the world.'⁴³ Because of the accomplishments experienced by many of these women as adults within politics and Society, the assertion of the inferiority of female education must be questioned. Young women raised in country houses with world-class libraries and surrounded by house parties that included the most glittering lights of the political and intellectual worlds were given early access to the sphere in which they would be expected to participate as adults, and this was considered to be an important aspect of their training. Intellectual curiosity was encouraged (within the appropriate bounds), particularly in arenas considered to be beneficial in later life. Literature and languages were an early interest of Lady Helen Blackwood, and her parents encouraged her pursuits.⁴⁴ Politics was an additional area in which some young women showed an early interest. In the 1910s, Lady Maureen Stewart was one of these politically minded young ladies, and this interest was especially encouraged by her grandmother, Theresa, dowager marchioness of Londonderry, who had also developed political interests in her teens. The correspondence between Lady Maureen and the marchioness not only demonstrates the family's shared interests and the marchioness'

⁴² Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* (London, 1982), p.21; Gerard, *Country House Life*, p.52

⁴³ Leslie, *The Marlborough House Set*, pp.11,15

⁴⁴ H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Londonderrys: A Family Portrait* (London, 1979), p.63; PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/G/6/10. Lady Helen Blackwood to Hariot, marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, 3 April

considerable political acumen, but also shows how actively interested Theresa was in Maureen's education, and her willingness to encourage her granddaughter's pursuit of the subject.⁴⁵

Beyond what they could access in libraries and parties at home, and through correspondence with friends and relatives, the academic subjects most emphasised for aristocratic girls were the modern languages, while 'accomplishments' such as music, art, and dancing were also stressed. Despite the apparently ornamental nature of this core curriculum, it had practical uses: proficiency in languages was as much of a boon for the wives of diplomats who held positions across Europe and the Empire as beautiful manners. The women who held these positions, like the 1st marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, her daughter, Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson (née Blackwood, later Lady Novar), Lady Honoria, countess of Belmore (née Gladstone), and the 5th marchioness of Lansdowne (née Lady Maud Hamilton), were expected to represent both their families and their countries within the diplomatic sphere. For those women who did not hold or support official positions, an early interest and training in literature or music provided entertainment during the many hours spent within the country house or London drawing room.

Most aristocratic girls continued to be educated at home well into the twentieth century, following a pattern of self-education that had not experienced fundamental change for centuries. In general, it was the middle and upper-middle class girl who benefited most from the advances made in women's education from the 1870s onwards. There were, however, some exceptions to this trend. Women from the Annesley, Dufferin, and Leslie families all attended school for at least a portion of their educational lives, although what these schools actually offered in terms of curricula and educational priorities is as variable as the experience of the young woman who studied at home. Young women from the aristocratic families of Ulster attended a range of different types of schools, including primary schools for children between the ages of seven and twelve, secondary boarding schools for young ladies, and finishing schools on the Continent. Many of the young women who attended some type of school during this period experienced particular family circumstances that made formal education away from the home a necessity. The exception to this pattern of the use of schools by aristocratic families who were not living traditional,

⁴⁵ Diane Urquhart, *The Ladies of Londonderry: Women and Political Patronage* (London, 2007), p. 79. Also see PRONI, Theresa Londonderry Papers, D/2846/1/13/1, and D/2846/2/35

landed lives was the education of Lady Maureen Stewart, who attended a boarding school in the early 1910s, despite the provision of a full nursery and schoolroom within her parents' homes.⁴⁶

For Hermione and Victoria Blackwood, the youngest daughters of the 1st marquess of Dufferin and Ava, it was the frequent travel necessitated by their father's diplomatic career that called for the schooling of the youngest children away from home. However, there may have been additional influences at work in this case. Hermione and Victoria attended an institution in Boulogne, France, which was run on a small scale by a French family. The obvious intention was to foster the girls' language skills, as well as drawing, deportment, and dancing, all of which were included in the curriculum.⁴⁷ The school was also the same one that Hariot, marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, had attended in her own girlhood, offering in the educational patterns of the Dufferin family an assertion of lineage and a clear indication of community that is most often found in the educational patterns of the aristocracy at the public schools.⁴⁸

It was the death of Hugh, 5th earl Annesley, in 1908 that offered the opportunity of boarding and finishing school to his daughters, the Ladies Clare and Constance Annesley, who were teenagers at the time. Clare was immediately sent to an advanced finishing school for young ladies in Dresden, where the emphasis was overwhelmingly on musical skills as taught by the piano mistress, who had been a pupil of Clara Schumann. After a round of country house visits with her mother, Constance was enrolled at Downe House, Kent, recently established by a learned lady in the former home of Charles Darwin. Like her sister, Constance's studies concentrated mostly on languages and music, though the school at Downe House was obviously influenced by developing attitudes about the necessary exercise for young women, and the students were also required to participate in sports such as cricket and lacrosse.⁴⁹ Constance followed her English boarding school experience with attendance

⁴⁶ PRONI, Theresa Londonderry Papers, D/2846/2/35. Lady Maureen Stewart to the 6th marquess of Londonderry, n.d.

⁴⁷ PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/L/5/4. Lady Hermione Blackwood to Lady Helen Blackwood, n.d.

⁴⁸ PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/F/6/14. Lady Hermione Blackwood to the 1st marquess of Dufferin and Ava, n.d.

⁴⁹ Malleon, *After Ten Years*, p.30

both at the finishing school in Dresden and with two years spent at a similar establishment in Paris.⁵⁰

While Clare and Constance Annesley enjoyed their education abroad, not all girls did. The happy coincidence that allowed the Annesley girls that opportunity at exactly the time when they most wanted it was occasioned by necessity that had little to do with their interests. Priscilla Annesley's desire to travel and entertain away from the family home at Castlewellan was similar to the social necessities that placed the offspring of Shane and Marjorie Leslie in school a little later in the twentieth century. Around the same time, the Dufferin tradition of sending young women to boarding school was continued for the young Veronica Blackwood, despite her protestations, in part in order to free her parents, the 3rd marquess and marchioness, for their social schedule.⁵¹ According to Anita Leslie, whose mother and father were close friends of the Dufferins in the 1920s: 'In my parents' view schools performed the same function that kennels did for dogs. They were places where pets could be conveniently deposited while their owners travelled.'⁵² Aristocratic parents were not always influenced solely, or primarily, by a desire to better educate their children.

This early training at boarding school altered the individual patterns of the lives of these women, and additionally reflected trends of change within the aristocracy at large. While limited, this sample of women from the aristocratic families of Ulster demonstrates a higher likelihood of the pursuance of non-traditional public and professional roles among those young women who attended boarding school than among those who were educated within the home. Of the seven young women from these families who attended a boarding school for a portion of their educational lives, five later pursued non-landed careers in medicine, the arts, or politics, a much higher proportion than among their home-schooled contemporaries.⁵³ This is likely due to the confluence of factors of both home-life and education: these young women, as has been discussed, generally experienced family circumstances that were unusual for their class at the time. Their unorthodox home situations may have encouraged, or pushed, them into pursuing careers in their own rights, aided by the independence they gained from their time spent away from the family home. Overall, the

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p.40

⁵¹ Leslie, *The Gilt and the Gingerbread*, p.101

⁵² *ibid.*, p.68

⁵³ Clare and Constance Annesley (1910s); Hermione and Victoria Blackwood (1880s); Veronica Blackwood (1920s); Anita Leslie (1920s); Maureen Stewart (1910s)

curricula of these schools, which differed minimally from what they were taught in the schoolroom, may have made very little difference in their futures, while their increased independence and self-reliance, or even discomfort with family life or inability to appropriately live in and manage the country house environment, did change the patterns of their lives. Young women who watched their brothers undertake formal education away from home, but who were not given the same opportunity, certainly wondered if this would have made a difference in their own lives. As Mabel Annesley wrote, ‘Had I been sent to school, I might have learned to make more friends; but I lived through my school days without many human contacts.’⁵⁴ The effect of formal schooling on the social and professional lives of the aristocratic girl appears to have been significant within this sample, as was the idea of the school experience on those within the case study who did not attend.

Overall, what this shows is that while in the 1870s young aristocratic women were still educated almost exclusively at home, by the turn of the twentieth century an increased interest can be seen among these aristocratic families for sending young women to school. This can be attributed to the confluence of two factors: the development of elite female education during the years between 1870 and 1925, and the shifts in living patterns experienced by many aristocratic families in the face of the economic, social, and political changes of the early twentieth century. While in the 1890s families like the Dufferins sent daughters to school out of a necessity occasioned by imperial obligations, by the 1920s their descendants were unable to live year-round at Clondeboye for financial reasons, and spent much of their year taking advantage of the hospitality of friends at various country houses. Other families, such as the Londonderrys, chose to take advantage of the new advances in female education during the early twentieth century, despite being fully able to educate daughters within the traditional environment of the country home. In this way, the advances made in the education of women during the early twentieth century combined with the contemporaneous decline of the traditional lifestyle of the aristocracy to forge a change in the educational practises of the elite, and began to alter the patterns of aristocratic life by offering new, non-traditional patterns for the lives of the daughters of the aristocracy.

For young aristocratic women, the transition between the childhood world of the nursery and the adult world of the drawing room was unclear, and school may have provided

⁵⁴ Annesley, *As the Sight is Bent*

for some of these girls a clearer path for this transition. Mid- and late-Victorian authors recognised the ambiguous role of young women at this time, and the difficulties parents seem to have encountered when planning their daughters' educations and debut. Theresa, dowager marchioness of Londonderry, felt that it was John Ruskin who most clearly understood this question, and referred her granddaughter, Lady Maureen, to Ruskin's discussion of the feminine role in 'Of Queen's Gardens' (1865) in the 1910s, although both were showing their age by this time. According to the Marchioness, Ruskin 'to my mind gives woman her proper position.'⁵⁵ Ruskin's picture of the ideal role of the sexes is one that eschews ideas of the superiority of male over female, insisting that they cannot be compared in similar things.⁵⁶ Ruskin and the Marchioness had high expectations for British womanhood: 'she must be enduringly, incorruptibly good, instinctively and infallibly wise,'⁵⁷ using her talents for rule, arrangement, and order to complement the active, progressive means of men. Young women were accordingly trained using the ideal presented in prescriptive writings such as these, although they would find that as adults, the separateness of the feminine from masculine would not be so clearly cut.

For women, fashion was both a tool and an obligation, and one into which debutantes were trained early in their social careers. The marquess of Dufferin and Ava wrote evocatively to Lady Hermione on the subject while she was in London, reminding her that

A lady can never be too smart... No woman ever has a right to be either dowdy or untidy, for then she becomes a stumbling block and a rack of offence to all her friends and relations, and as nature has made you pretty, you should do your best to express your gratitude by showing off your gifts to the best advantage.⁵⁸

The language used by the marquess is littered with the expectations placed on young women regarding their appearance, and it is clear that the stakes were high. In her father's words, Lady Hermione has no 'right' to present herself less than immaculately, and to do so would be to behave ungratefully. Failure to dress appropriately for her class, age, and sex would offend her friends and relations, and worse yet, would to hold them, as well as herself, back. For the marquess, the badly presented young woman was a 'stumbling block', and in this

⁵⁵ PRONI, Theresa Londonderry Papers, D/2846/1/13/1. Theresa, Dowager Marchioness of Londonderry to Lady Maureen Stewart, 5 March 1917

⁵⁶ John Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies* (London, 1865), p.67

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p.69

⁵⁸ PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/M/1/5. From 1st marquess of Dufferin and Ava to Lady Hermione Blackwood, 28 April 1889

letter, he was expressly warning Hermione that to fail to comply would make her a hindrance to the progress of her family.

The physical manifestations of feminine restrictions in the form of dress could, for many girls, be justified by the perceived increase in glamour that accompanied this symbol of the maturing process, although not all young women relished the changes. Lady Helen Blackwood wrote to her mother in excitement when she first began wearing stays, which she felt ‘were a little tight at first, but now are much looser.’⁵⁹ Much of the debate over corsetry seems to have centred on the subject of ‘tight-lacing’, which does not seem to have been an aesthetic or sartorial choice preferred by the aristocratic women of Ulster.⁶⁰ Certainly corsetry was an important part of the mantle of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century femininity, as is demonstrated both by the Blackwood correspondence and by the silhouettes of Ulster’s elite, which appeared with ever-greater frequency in the papers of the time. However, the overwhelming number of these women who participated in demanding forms of elite sports, such as riding, shooting, and sailing would have made tight-lacing as fashionable among women like Princess Alexandra in the last years of the nineteenth century, unlikely, if not impossible.⁶¹

Despite the excitement felt by many young women about this change, which signaled in physical terms the beginning of their transition from girl to woman, and preceded the debut of the aristocrat within Society, it was also often accompanied by ambivalence, both about the new physical restrictions placed on them by their clothing, and about their role within their family and society. On the arrival within the family group of her glamorous step-mother, Mabel Annesley was brought out into Society, and the clothes brought as much discomfort as the social situations: ‘She bought me smart clothes, which I wore in secret agony. She told me to ‘make conversation’ and I used conversation as a shield,’ she later

⁵⁹ PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/G/6/8. Lady Helen Blackwood to Harriot, marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, n.d.

⁶⁰ The constraints imposed by the assumed ‘femininity’ of the post-pubescent aristocratic girl were echoed in those of the customary clothing she wore: as a child she wore simple, sturdy garments in which she had the free use of her limbs; as a young woman skirts dragged on the floor and corsets held the waist tightly, a recommendation offered by some doctors who promoted the use of corsetry to offer ‘support’ to the frame of a growing girl. (Gorham, *The Victorian Girl*, p.83) The debate about corsetry as a symbol (of oppression, of sexuality, of power) is a charged one, as was evidenced by the debate between Helene Roberts, David Kunzle, and Joanna Russ in the journal *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* in 1977, in which corsetry is referred to by Kunzle as the ‘scapegoat of costume history’.

⁶¹ Helene E. Roberts, ‘A Reply to David Kunzle on “The Exquisite Slave: The Role of Clothes in the Making of the Victorian Woman”’ *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Winter, 1977), p.519

wrote in her memoirs.⁶² The relationship between female adulthood and clothing as reflected in the sources of Lady Mabel's discomfort is an important one within this group of families, and reflects the crucial role of clothing as a signifier of identity. As Helene Roberts has recognised, 'Garments signal to the world the role the wearer may be expected to play and remind the wearer of the responsibilities of that role,'⁶³ and as representatives of their families within Society, the aristocratic debutante was placed almost instantaneously within the position of heavy responsibility.

In the words of the marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, fashion for the debutante was 'a matter of duty'.⁶⁴ The marchioness expected her daughters to be fashionably dressed and expressed this frequently in her letters, especially those penned while her second daughter, Lady Hermione Blackwood, was in London.⁶⁵ This was likely to have been at least partly influenced by the Marchioness' own fondness for fashion and the success she had forged as a diplomatic hostess through her own ability to present herself beautifully. Lady Dufferin understood the social power of exhibiting her aesthetic authority through fashion. However, the matter was sufficiently important for the marquess of Dufferin to also instruct Lady Hermione on dress. He wrote to Hermione in 1889, expressing his wish that his daughter would 'not worry... Mamma about your dresses, but will dress well, which is one of the greatest obligations imposed on a lady.'⁶⁶ Lady Dufferin later stressed the same obligation to nature placed on young women, telling Hermione that 'having been endowed with three good looking daughters, I don't even like to think of them badly got up and less pretty than they are meant to be.'⁶⁷

As a pretty young woman ostensibly in search of a husband, it was Hermione's obligation, as well as in her best interest, to present herself well. However, as a member of an aristocratic class faced by an increasingly well-presented middle and mercantile class,

⁶² Annesley, *As the Sight is Bent*

⁶³ Helene E. Roberts, 'The Exquisite Slave: The Role of Clothes in the Making of the Victorian Woman', in Peter McNeil (ed.), *Fashion: Critical and Primary Sources, Volume 3: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 2009), p.175

⁶⁴ PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/M/2/12. Hariot, marchioness of Dufferin and Ava to Lady Hermione Blackwood, 12 August 1890

⁶⁵ PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/M/2/27,29. Hariot, marchioness of Dufferin and Ava to Lady Hermione Blackwood, 29 Jun, 14 July 1890

⁶⁶ PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/M/1/5. 1st marquess of Dufferin and Ava to Lady Hermione Blackwood, 28 April 1889

⁶⁷ PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/M/2/37. Hariot, marchioness of Dufferin and Ava to Lady Hermione Blackwood, 11 September 1890

Hermione's ability to distinguish between the intricacies of late nineteenth century aesthetic taste also reflected on her education and on her family's place within the elite. For Ascot in 1890 Hariot, marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, suggested Hermione purchase a pink or light blue silk dress with white lace, which would also be suitable for dances. She reminded her daughter that by presenting herself well she was representing her entire family, and particularly emphasised how well it would reflect on her sister and chaperone, Lady Helen, and her husband, Ronald Munro Ferguson.⁶⁸ The ostensibly simple white and light-coloured dresses of the nineteenth-century aristocratic debutante were actually packed with a complex code of personal, social, and financial charms and allegiances. As well as integrating personal attraction and family expectation into their appearance, debutantes were also expected to exhibit the innocence of the virginal Angel in the House, as well as the personal strength and intellectual ability to bear and raise a large family and manage the affairs of the aristocratic home and social world.⁶⁹

While for young women, life in the nursery continued throughout their teenage years in a form that more or less prolonged the education they had as children, young men had different pattern of upbringing, which lead to a different estimation of the age and educational level that was required for 'adulthood'. For aristocratic boys, nursery life generally ceased before age ten, when the boys would enter a preparatory school in order to prime them for entrance into one of the great public schools. Prep school began the separate education of young men, which was continued for all the young men in these families with attendance at public school in England, where among their brothers, cousins, and peers, they would continue to develop the concepts of kinship and community that had been emphasised throughout their early years. Despite this continuity, for some boys, prep school felt very harsh: the transition at a young age from the comfort of the nursery and the companionship of brothers and sisters was, in the words of Anita Leslie, 'a horrible break.'⁷⁰ But for these young men who, like Archibald Blackwood, Earl of Ava, started school at a young age far

⁶⁸ PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/M/2/9. Hariot, Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava to Lady Hermione Blackwood, 1890

⁶⁹ Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity*, p.123; Coventry Patmore, 'The Angel in the House' (1854). Patmore published subsequent additions to his canonical work on the ideal Victorian woman: in 1856 with 'The Espousals'; in 1860, with 'Faithful for Ever'; and in 1862, with 'The Victories of Love'.

⁷⁰ Leslie, *The Marlborough House Set*, p.11

from their families, the sufferings of prep school minimised the shock of the later regime of public school, where almost all boys would be enrolled by the age of thirteen.⁷¹ Additionally, this ‘break’ may have been over-emphasised in the past. Young men from the elite classes were taken from their circle of kinship at home, but were often then reintegrated within a community at school which included siblings and cousins who had already left the country house schoolroom, thereby extending one of the benefits of the large and extended circle of aristocratic kinship.

The goal of the preparatory school was to give the young boy some academic grounding before he entered the public school, and the prep schools organised their curricula accordingly. At his school in Brighton in the late 1860s Henry Vane-Tempest studied a range of subjects that would form the core of the classically-based Eton curriculum, including Latin and Greek translation, Latin composition, Divinity, and French, supplemented by tutorials in Mathematics, History, and Geography.⁷² Beyond the early academic training these boys received, they were seen to receive from early schooling advantages in social terms, as well, benefiting from their removal from the sheltered world of the country house nursery. At preparatory school, young men like Charles, Lord Castlereagh, who attended Mortimer Vicarage School in the early 1890s, would begin to be introduced to their future peers,⁷³ at the same time often being initiated into this environment with their male cousins and brothers.⁷⁴

Young men from these families attended public school in England, and some of them continued on to attend university, primarily at Oxford or Cambridge, often matriculating at a school, and sometimes at a college, that was traditionally associated with their family. This establishment of a family pattern within the schooling of the aristocracy was important, as it helped to perpetrate the particular values associated both with a family and with the school of their choice, and confirmed the sense of community within the aristocracy. Additionally, the

⁷¹ PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/I/3/1. Archibald, Earl of Ava, to Lord Terence Blackwood, c. 1875; Gerard, *Country House Life*, p.49; Leslie, *The Marlborough House Set*, p.12

⁷² DCRO, Londonderry Papers, D/Lo/C 581. Preparatory school progress reports on Henry Vane-Tempest, 1866 -1868

⁷³ PRONI, Theresa Londonderry Papers, D/2846/3/20. Letters and papers of the 6th marquess of Londonderry and Theresa, Lady Londonderry, about their elder son, Viscount Castlereagh, 1889-1915. Class Lists, 1890-1891, from Mortimer Vicarage School

⁷⁴ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/D/14/1. Outsize volume containing loose letters, telegrams, etc. regarding Lord Newry [later 4th earl of Kilmorey]

choice of long-established English schools, rather than their counterparts in Ireland or even Scotland, helped to further solidify the cultural unionism of the aristocracy of the entire United Kingdom. Children raised in country homes across the United Kingdom were encouraged to think of the British Isles as an indivisible unit, and the supra-national character of schools like Eton and Harrow supported these ideals and the wider elite community of which their pupils were a part.

Overwhelmingly, Eton was the school of choice for the aristocracy, both for these families from the north of Ireland, and for their contemporaries from across the United Kingdom.⁷⁵ The continuance of Eton's dominance of the academic sphere had as much to do with the connections that could be formed within the school environment as with those characteristics that were particularly associated with the school, such as individuality.⁷⁶ circularly put, as long as the most powerful men in the country sent their sons to Eton, the most powerful men in the country would continue to send their sons to Eton. In part, Eton was seen as grooming boys for politics, the ideal destiny of the aristocrat, which encouraged the attendance both of boys who were expected to follow a future career in politics, and those who had already shown some ability in this sphere. According to Brian Gardner, a strong sense of duty was a corollary aspect of the Etonian's personality, and this cannot be separated from the expectation of aristocratic participation in politics, both on a local and national level.⁷⁷

Three-quarters of the families from this sample of the Ulster aristocracy sent at least one son to Eton, while families like the Ernes, Lesliees, and Londonderrys chose to send multiple generations there, cementing the relationship between the family and the school both horizontally, as brothers attended the school at the same time, and vertically, guaranteeing a shared experience between father and son. Shane Leslie saw his experience at Eton as a fortifying one (though not wholly positive), and he felt that the Etonian would inevitably 'imbibe a sense of effortless superiority and be lulled in a consciousness of unassailable primacy.'⁷⁸ As one of many Londonderry boys who had attended Eton, Robin, Lord Castlereagh, doubtless felt the connection to his ancestors, especially after receiving a letter

⁷⁵ Dominic Lieven, *The Aristocracy in Europe, 1815-1914* (Basingstoke, 1992), p.161

⁷⁶ Mark Girouard, *The Return To Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven, 1981), pp.71,74

⁷⁷ Brian Gardner, *The Public School: An Historical Survey* (London, 1973), pp.35-36

⁷⁸ Shane Leslie, *The End of a Chapter* (London, 1916), p.30

from his grandmother, the dowager marchioness, who wrote of the pleasure his late grandfather would have received to see him starting his education there.⁷⁹

From the mid-nineteenth century, Harrow was firmly established as Eton's educational and sporting rival.⁸⁰ The sons of the earls of Caledon attended Harrow, as did four young Abercorns (sons of the 1st duke). However, by the 1880s, the 2nd duke of Abercorn had changed his allegiance, and sent his son James (later 3rd duke of Abercorn) to Eton, thereby dividing the schooling record of the Abercorn family.⁸¹ Other families, like the Ernes, also established traditions within two schools, sending equal numbers to Eton and to Radley College, despite the fact that Radley's inclusion within the ranks of the public schools was at times debated, the school having only been established in the mid-nineteenth century.⁸² Some families patronised a variety of schools, including Rugby, Stowe, and Uppingham. Winchester continued to attract aristocratic pupils, as well, including members of the Belmore family, and young Lord Frederick Blackwood (later 3rd marquess of Dufferin), who proudly included the school motto, 'Manners Makyth Man', in a letter to his sister Lady Hermione.⁸³ Wellington Academy was another choice made by many aristocratic families, though because of the particular nature of the curriculum at Wellington (which concentrated on more modern subjects such as mathematics more than any other school of the time) and the close connection the school had to Sandhurst Academy, it was generally selected for boys who showed a particular aptitude for future military service, or those who were expected to fulfil this role by nature of their order of birth.⁸⁴ Within families with strong allegiances to a particular school, only very specific reasons seem to have encouraged aristocrats from the north of Ireland to abandon these traditions.

In terms of education, the differences between the schools may have been irrelevant: according to Rupert Wilkinson, by the 1870s the various curricula at the institutions were remarkable only in their uniformity.⁸⁵ The grounding in the classics that most boys received

⁷⁹ PRONI, Theresa Londonderry Papers, D/2846/1/13/1. Theresa, Dowager Marchioness of Londonderry to Robin, Lord Castlereagh, 3 May 1916

⁸⁰ Gardner, *The Public School*, p.109

⁸¹ PRONI, Abercorn Papers, D/623/A/336/5. Unknown Eton tutor to 2nd Duke of Abercorn, 29 July 1886

⁸² Gardner, *The Public School*, p.201

⁸³ PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/M/5/9. Lord Frederick Blackwood to Lady Hermione Blackwood, n.d.

⁸⁴ Gardner, *The Public School*, p.182

⁸⁵ Rupert Wilkinson, *The Prefects: British Leadership and the Public School Tradition* (London, 1964), p.22

at preparatory school would be continued at public school, and those boys who displayed an interest in joining the military after school were well-served both by the special courses offered to them (Lord James Hamilton, later 3rd duke of Abercorn, was enrolled in this Army Class), and in the school military corps. The Army Class added to the standard classics-based curriculum such subjects as advanced mathematics, geometrical drawing, and geography, although young men expected to go on to a career in the military would also need additional tutoring after they finished school.⁸⁶ The sons of the 4th earl and countess of Enniskillen and 4th earl and countess of Erne, who formed a collective of five cousins, attended Eton, and were members of the Corps there. Their parents' pride in their association is demonstrated in the photo album of the young men in their various uniforms.⁸⁷

Years spent at public school were considered by aristocratic families to be formative for their sons, and to solidify the importance of ideals—ancestral duty, aristocratic community, and adherence to the principles of elite culture, such as taste, fondness for the out of doors, and a strict exterior application of gender distinctions—that had been introduced to them in their early education. A militaristic patriotism was increasingly a part of this idea from the early nineteenth century onwards, and is inherently tied to the idea of patrician honour.⁸⁸ The dowager marchioness of Londonderry pointed out to her grandson, Lord Castlereagh, that 'this is the only time you have got to work really,' as she encouraged him to apply himself to his studies and to sport.⁸⁹ Other parents were less concerned with academic achievement than with the indoctrination of character: in a letter to his wife Lord Cole wrote of their son, John's, manliness when being taken to the train for school, and of his hopes that he will 'come out a gentleman.'⁹⁰ According to Linda Colley, this idea of moral training was manifested by the end of the eighteenth century in both the character and the language of the elite and was what had made the public school an indispensable part of the elite education: the young man sent away from his home was 'exposed to a uniform set of ideas and learnt how to speak the English language in a distinctive and characteristic way.'⁹¹ These particular

⁸⁶ PRONI, Abercorn Papers, D/623/A/336/5. Unknown tutor (signature illegible), Eton College, to the marquess of Hamilton, 29 Jul 1886

⁸⁷ PRONI, Enniskillen Papers, D/1702/11/6. Family photograph album, 1899-1902

⁸⁸ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven and London, 1992), p.167

⁸⁹ PRONI, Theresa Londonderry Papers, D/2846/1/13/1. Theresa, dowager marchioness of Londonderry to Robin, Lord Castlereagh, 17 November 1916

⁹⁰ PRONI, Enniskillen Papers, D/1702/12/42/1. Lord Cole to Lady Cole, 1886

⁹¹ Colley, *Britons*, p.167

characteristics—those that marked out the ‘gentleman’ in Lord Cole’s mind—were the means by which the public school helped to forge the elite community. Scholars have examined the results of this system of schooling on the character of the elite, tracing the development of certain aristocratic characteristics from a system that required the rearing of young men away from their homes and families. What is seen by some family historians as the enforced development of a persona ‘deeply marked by an absence of family experience,’⁹² developed in an institution that acted as a rival to the family,⁹³ has been targeted by others as key in creating the necessary traits of aristocratic leadership, those characteristics that Lord Cole associated with the ‘gentleman’.⁹⁴ Men successfully raised within this system were extremely likely to continue its use for their own sons, thereby securing the continuance of the preparatory and public school system.

However, these arguments over-emphasise the separateness of the public school experience, which while influential on elite life, was not as black-and-white as has been presented in some of the secondary literature. The separation of aristocratic male adolescent education and elite domestic life was not as clear-cut as these arguments suggest, and therefore historians must examine ideas of the separation between public and private, between work and home, and between duty and pleasure in a more nuanced manner. The characteristics (emotional distance, the pervasiveness of adultery as a symptom of marital dissatisfaction, the dependency of the male aristocrat on club life and the male solidarity offered therein) stereotypically associated by modern historians with the nineteenth and early twentieth century aristocratic home are, in some ways, reflective of the environment that young men experienced within the public school. But within the context of the school young men were exposed to more than simply the homosocial bonds encouraged on the playing

⁹² Davidoff (et. al.), *The Family Story*, p.131

⁹³ Gerard, *Country House Life*, p.49; Wilkinson, *The Prefects*, pp.107,116. Scholars such as Wilkinson, Davidoff, and Gerard have argued the lack of interaction between these men as teenagers and their family changed the way they themselves looked at the family home. In Wilkinson’s estimation, ‘the schools produced better leaders than lovers, men of duty and fellowship rather than men who took easily to family warmth and feminine intimacy.’ (p. 107)

⁹⁴ Wilkinson, *The Prefects*, p.107; Lieven, *The Aristocracy in Europe*, p.161. Wilkinson has seen the system found at the public school as key in forming the men who would later run the Empire, in particular, referring to these men as ‘inoculated’ by boarding school conditions against homesickness and immured against the inevitable softness and comfort of the upper class household by the harsh regime of the dormitory. Dominic Lieven has theorised that in order to guarantee the development in these young men of the necessary characteristics for national and imperial leadership, it was necessary that early on they should be exposed to a world that was at once more physically demanding and more socially rigorous than that offered within the aristocratic nursery.

field. For the aristocracy, the school symbolised the continuity of the aristocratic family, especially in terms of fostering a set of beliefs and standards associated particularly with the elite. The public school boy did not exist within a vacuum, and the presence of the family is necessarily marked on any boy who goes to a school with a legacy. The records of the aristocratic families of Ulster also demonstrate the presence of the family in a much more tangible way: there was consistent interaction between parents, grandparents, siblings, and attendees of the public schools through visits, letters, holidays, and sports days.

The substantial record of sibling correspondence found between the Blackwood and Leslie siblings can be combined with the physical proximity of schools like Eton and Harrow to London and the home counties to demonstrate how connected young men were when away at school: the dowager duchess of Abercorn regularly invited her grandson James (later 3rd duke of Abercorn) to dine at her home at Coates and in London, while the dowager marchioness of Londonderry frequently took young Lord Castlereagh for tea in Windsor and to visit family friends in the area on the weekends.⁹⁵ Young Henry, Viscount Crichton, wrote to his father, the 4th earl of Erne, about visits from school to his grandmother, usually in company with his school age brothers and cousins.⁹⁶ For families who had attended the same school for generations, the attendance of parents at events like cricket matches, boat races, and sports days were aspects of the encouragement of a familial, class-based identity.⁹⁷ At the same time, the distance encouraged the development of a life-long pursuit of letter-writing, which would form a central obligation of these men as adults. By inserting early physical distance into the community of aristocratic kinship, these young men were encouraged early on to be active participants in the support and continuation of that community, even as they were integrated into the wider community of their peers from across the United Kingdom.

During the period between 1870 and 1925, a total of ten young men from the families included in this study followed their public school education with attendance at one of

⁹⁵ PRONI, Abercorn Papers, D/623/A/29. Dowager duchess of Abercorn to the marquess of Hamilton, 20 Mar 1888; PRONI, Theresa Londonderry Papers, D/2846/1/13/1. Theresa, dowager marchioness of Londonderry to Robin, Lord Castlereagh, 8 June 1917; Theresa dowager marchioness of Londonderry to Lord Stavordale, her grandson, 11 June 1916

⁹⁶ PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1939/21/9/44. Lord Henry Crichton to his father, the 4th earl of Erne, 17 April 1879

⁹⁷ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/D/14/1. Outsize volume containing loose letters, telegrams, etc. regarding Lord Newry [later 4th earl of Kilmorey]

England's premier universities, invariably Oxford or Cambridge. This group represents a small minority, but their institutional choices are significant within the context of the schooling of the landed classes: the choice of a university education at Oxford or Cambridge represents the central importance among the landed classes of teaching their offspring within a collective, United Kingdom-wide mould. Representatives from eight of the twelve families included in this study sent at least one son to Oxbridge, but these pupils are not limited to any specific group: neither wealth, nor social connections, nor primogeniture, seem to have determined which sons went to university. On the other hand, a family legacy within a particular institution, and a particular college within that institution, is certainly reflected in the choices made by some of these young men. Overwhelmingly, Christ Church College, Oxford, and Trinity College, Cambridge, were the destinations of the aristocracy of the north of Ireland, and legacies within these institutions can be seen in the attendance patterns of four of these families. However, nearly as many families broke this pattern, either sending consecutive generations to different colleges at the same university—as was the case of the Dufferins at Oxford University, where the 1st marquess attended Christ Church College, but his third son Basil matriculated at Balliol—or by attending both universities in different generations. This was the case within the Caledon family: the 4th earl graduated from Christ Church, Oxford, while his son, the 5th earl, preferred to attend Trinity College, Cambridge. This may suggest that it was the attendance at the university itself, rather than the college within that institution, which was crucial in imbuing personal and intellectual characteristics that were desired by the elite, and securing the place of these young men within a community of their peers. In other instances, the increased focus of these families on the British centre of the elite community is expressed in their educational patterns: Hugh, 5th earl Annesley was a student at Trinity College, Dublin, in the 1860s, but his son was alternately sent to Trinity College, Cambridge, at the turn of the twentieth century.

Scholars like Alvin Jackson and Olwen Purdue have recognised the important role of an Oxbridge education in the political lives of Ireland's landed classes, playing a significant, though diminishing, role in the training especially of Ulster Unionist party members in the 1880s.⁹⁸ However, this education also performed an exceptionally important social role for the supra-national, culturally unionist elite of the United Kingdom, and one which continued

⁹⁸ Alvin Jackson, *The Ulster Party: Irish Unionists in the House of Commons, 1884-1911* (Oxford, 1989), p.62; Olwen Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland*, p.159

to have a place within landed life even after the political relevance of this background had diminished. The time spent at Oxford and Cambridge by the sons of Ulster's peers further solidified their ties to the collective aristocratic heritage of the Irish and British landed classes. The social connections made during these early years acted as a continuation of those first forged at the public schools, rendered no less important by the fact that even into the twentieth century the social exclusivity of the Oxbridge education was based largely on the fact that they continued to draw a significant proportion of their student body from the Clarendon schools.⁹⁹ The nature of the education may have been little different from an advanced version of secondary school,¹⁰⁰ and the University culture may have been criticised in the contemporary press as little more than an extension of London's West End,¹⁰¹ but the Oxbridge education played an important part in solidifying the bonds of the elite, culturally unionist community among its future leaders.

The patterns of childrearing favoured by the aristocracy in the late-nineteenth century supported the stability of the elite world and the manners and attitudes that were crucial to the perpetuation of their way of life. The aristocracy used their methods of education and child-rearing as tools to foster a community of aristocratic kinship that supported their international culture and patterns of daily life. The early influence of a wide-ranging family circle on young men and women, the introduction of girls into Society at a young age, and the continued patronage of an elite circuit of preparatory and public schools, and at university, helped to establish among the aristocracy of Britain and Ireland a youthful common ground that would ally generations of aristocrats as they grew to adulthood. This method of child-rearing helped to further the supra-national character of the aristocracy even as it supported the conservative Unionist politics of the Ulster elite, rendering the aristocracy, for the most part, a cohesive cultural and political unit. For parents, developing an understanding of the methods of aristocratic life within their children was a primary goal, pursued both through their own advice and example, and through the means they used to further educate their children in the principles that characterised their class. From infancy on, children were indoctrinated into the rules that controlled elite society, and given an education that would best prepare them for the world they would enter as adults. As teenagers, both young men

⁹⁹ Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England, 1918-1951* (Oxford, 1998), p.33

¹⁰⁰ Abraham Flexner, *Universities* (New York, 1968), p.265

¹⁰¹ McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, p.33

and young women were trained in the behaviour that was seen as appropriate for their gender, and their understanding of the community of which they formed a part was continually reinforced by their interactions with servants and peers.

Where the subject matter of the traditional aristocratic education was still emphasised for the early twentieth-century child, the historian can examine whether the issue was less the subject matter than the ideas it encouraged: ultimately, whether these children were being educated, or if they were simply being trained through mimicry to perpetuate a pre-established order. Schooling for both girls and boys emphasised the continuance of established principles, rather than encouraging independent thought or intellectual growth. While the development of the young mind was an aspect of upper-class education, free thought and intellectual creativity were not priorities, and an understanding of the rules and an adherence to custom was actually the primary goal of the tutelage of the aristocracy.

Training through mimicry and a resistance to intellectual creativity is apparent in the education of young women, but this form of tutelage by conforming to pre-existing norms also formed a key aspect of public school education. The gender boundaries established in the schooling of elite young men may have been especially badly suited to the changes of the twentieth century. Traditionally, as adults, aristocratic men were much more likely to experience a sphere that was separate and homosocial than elite women: their primary professional and social world (including Parliament and government, the military, and the club) was solely male, and they therefore needed specific training to be able to operate well within this sphere. The all-male environment at the public school, which emphasised gender boundaries, religious sectarianism, and class distinctions, provided this. Women, on the other hand, were continually part of a world that mixed genders and classes. In Society, on the estate, and in the home, women were expected to interact with their peers of both sexes, and to be comfortable with the management of a variety of persons of other classes in the form of servants, tradesmen, and tenants. Early exposure to this environment prepared them for this. To some extent, the aristocratic girl educated at one of the new women's boarding schools may have been the best prepared of her class to meet the changes of the twentieth century, demonstrating that where the aristocracy of Ulster was able to adapt to change, they did this successfully.

Through the collective upbringing of young aristocrats, the elite encouraged the continuance of the supra-national community of landowners throughout the United Kingdom,

and re-emphasised the importance of this community through the relationships they established and encouraged both within the family and with servants. The education of young aristocrats as they entered adolescence further encouraged this sense of community, introducing young men into the group of their peers at an early age, while keeping young women within the family group and continually under the watchful eye of Society. These patterns echoed those that had guided aristocratic education in Britain and Ireland for centuries. Ultimately, as the structures of society changed during the twentieth century, removing the systems of deference, service, and class and gender divisions from the public and private spheres, the traditional training that both men and women received was rendered increasingly anachronistic.



The Abercorn family on the eighty-second birthday of the dowager duchess of Abercorn, Montagu House, Whitehall. From a photograph by Hills and Saunders, 1894

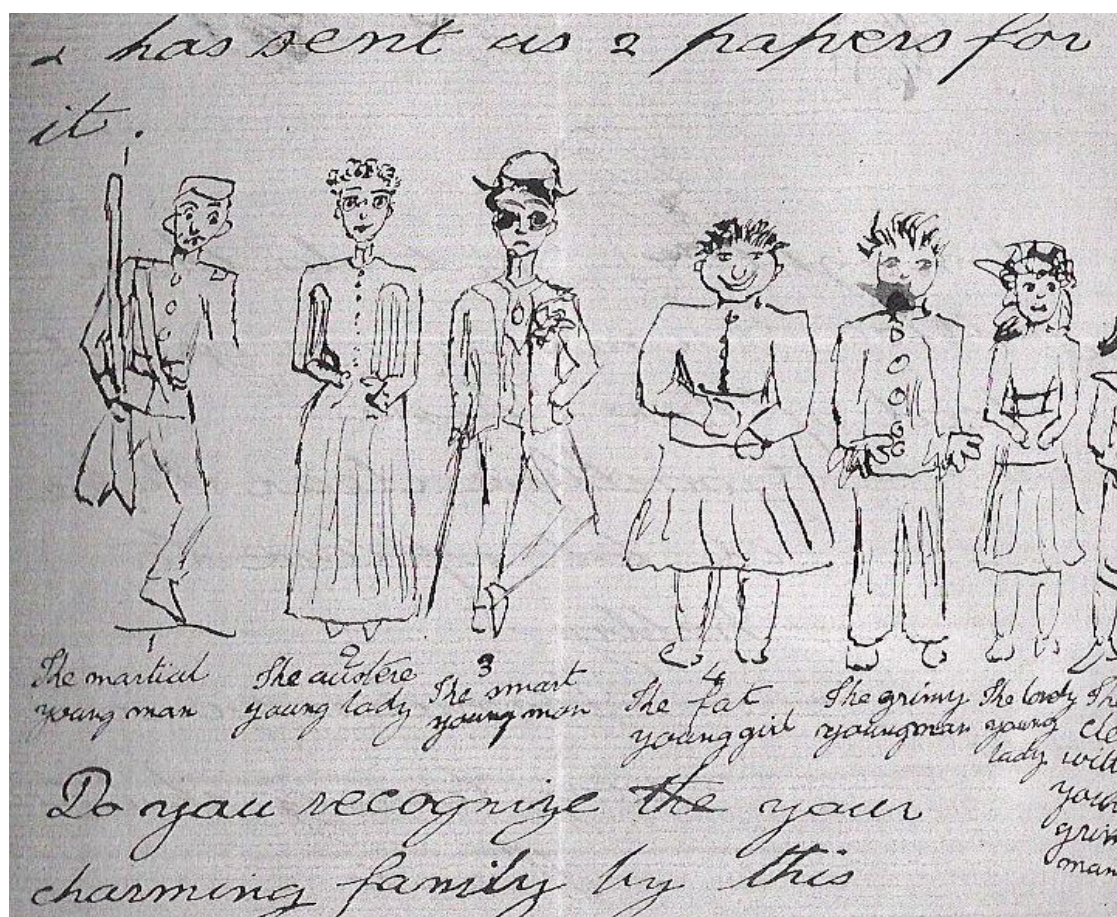
YESTERDAY'S WEDDING.



LADY CYNTHIA NEEDHAM'S HEIRLOOM VEIL AND HER BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES.

The little bridesmaids were in white satin covered with cream net, mob caps, and pale-blue sashes. The older bridesmaids also wore cream net with blue sash. Their hats were in cloud colour, pale blue, and silver.

Press coverage of aristocratic weddings was comprehensive, concentrating particularly on the material aspects of the elite marriage. Here, the bridesmaid's gowns for the wedding of Lady Cynthia Needham, daughter of the earl of Kilmorey, are given primary space, with secondary attention given to the antique lace veil of the bride, and to the appearance of the young flower girls. From the *Daily Graphic*, 9 October 1908



An illustration of her brothers and sisters by Lady Hermione Blackwood, c. 1885. This drawing by Hermione, age 15, was sent to her father, the 1st Marquess of Dufferin and Ava, and shows the seven Blackwood siblings, with identifying captions. Lord Ava (age 21) is 'The Martial Young Man'; Lady Helen Blackwood (19) is 'The Austere Young Lady'; Lord Terence Blackwood (18) is 'The Smart Young Man'; Lady Hermione herself is 'The Fat Young Girl'; Lord Basil Blackwood (14) is 'The Grimy Young Man'; Lady Victoria Blackwood (11) is 'The Lovely Young Lady'; Lord Frederick Blackwood (9) is 'The Clever, Witty, Grimy, Young Man' (partially cut off). PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/F/6/10



A photograph of the family of the 4th Earl of Belmore, c. 1870. In particular, the varieties of female childhood and adolescent dress are shown in the photo, which shows the nine daughters of the family (ranging in age from 3 to 27 years) in what would have been customary dress for them at the time. PRONI, Belmore Papers, D/3007/Z

FOUR

FUNCTIONAL, FASHIONABLE, AFFORDABLE: REASSERTING THE PLACE OF THE POST-ASCENDANCY ARISTOCRACY AS PATRONS OF ARCHITECTURE AND INTERIORS IN THE NORTH OF IRELAND

The homes of Ulster's aristocracy were reflections of their ancestry and taste, permanent symbols of their connection to their inheritance. As Toby Barnard has written, 'houses aptly embodied the antiquity, eminence, and superiority of owners.'¹ The aristocracy of Ulster used architecture, interiors, and garden design as they employed the other cultural tools they had at hand: they adapted their lifestyles and patterns of behaviour to their time, and utilised them to re-declare their relevance within the spheres of society and aesthetics. At the same time, they consciously tied their commissions to their historic, landowning legacies, and used the connections made with craftsmen in the field to cement their place within the cultural world of Britain and Ireland's elite. Within this group of families, the building record on their primary Ulster estates during this time was significant, ranging from full-scale reconstructions to large schemes of redecoration, and coloured by the changing technological, social, and aesthetic preferences of the day. This chapter will concentrate on those houses where the existing record for these constructions is most forthcoming, for the most part leaving aside those homes where change was certainly in existence, but less clearly recorded. The analysis will concentrate on the building projects at seven of the twelve principal homes of these families, looking at: the complete reconstruction of Castle Leslie; the upgrading of technology and décor at Castlewella; three massive projects of renovation and redecoration at Clondeboy House; additions to family, guest, and service quarters, and a resulting redecoration project, at Crom Castle; two sets of early twentieth-century stylistic

¹ Toby Barnard, *Making the Grand Figure: Lives and Possessions in Ireland, 1641-1770* (New Haven and London, 2004), p.35

changes at Mountstewart; additions and renovation, particularly on the entrance front, at Mourne Park; and the construction of a service wing at Rossmore Park. The chapter will concentrate on looking both at the renovations and constructions that were commissioned on these estates between 1870 and 1925, and at the ways in which these alterations were representative of the larger cultural currents within the lifestyle of the aristocrats of Ulster during this time.

The aristocracy of Ulster renovated in this period order to keep up with contemporary expectations, not only in terms of symbolism and display, but also in terms of advancing architectural and domestic technologies. They did this in similar patterns and ways to their ancestors in the eighteenth and earlier nineteenth centuries, adding to the material record on their estates. However, this period has been categorised as one with a very limited record of building for the elite, both over-emphasising the architectural patronage of the eighteenth century, and minimising the work that was done during the later nineteenth century. Architecture, while a means by which the elite could assert their primacy, was always a slow and costly tool for social advancement. As Barnard has recognised, many earlier aristocrats preferred piecemeal alterations of surrounding and interiors to the complete reconstruction of their homes, and this is reflected in the seventeenth and eighteenth century record of some of Ireland's premier families, including the Boyles and the Butlers.²

This sort of alteration has been ignored in past scholarship of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, leading to a representation of a dearth of architectural patronage during this time. This has largely been due to two factors: aristocratic commissions in Ulster during this period have been dismissed by twentieth century historians in preference for the Georgian architecture of their predecessors, and the subject has additionally been neglected, as much of the elite culture of late nineteenth century Ulster has been, in the face of concentration on the political and economic issues of this time. Crom Castle, built by Edward Blore in the 1830s, and altered and modernised by William Hague in the 1880s, offers a prime example of the neglect that has been suffered by Ulster's late-nineteenth century architectural heritage due to the twentieth-century preference for Georgian style. In the 1980s, Gervase Jackson-Stops described the house as a 'more 'primitive' version of [Edward] Blore's later masterpiece, Merevale... Crom is the kind of country house that has

² *ibid.*, p.39

long been out of fashion.’³ The stylistic preference of twentieth century for the Georgian over the Victorian was already evident as early as 1910 in the reaction against mid-nineteenth century style prevalent within the homes of Ulster’s aristocracy, as will be discussed later in this chapter. By the 1930s, Thomas Hussey would dismissively write in *Country Life* of the abandonment a century earlier of the neo-Classical style ‘for a Gothic that, historically defensible in England, was as inappropriate as unfortunate in Ireland.’⁴

Yet within Ulster, the adherence to the neo-Gothic style was reflective of the society in which these families lived, and suggests something of an architectural distinctiveness within the region that was influenced by the particular history, culture, and social preoccupations of the north of Ireland’s landed families. The country estate was symbolic of aristocratic permanence: inherited by multiple generations within each family, the house and its demesne acted as a totem of familial longevity and as a physical tie to the land that secured the aristocratic fortunes. Like the family portrait collection, the homes of the privileged acted as symbols of the durability of the aristocratic legacy. Among the upper-classes, an adherence to philosophies and ideologies promoting the continuance of lineage, a lasting (and perhaps over-optimistic) connection to the land, and romantic ideals of by-gone notions of hospitality and *noblesse oblige* no less influenced the creation of a style that can be viewed as having specific regional and socio-economic characteristics. In an era in which the permanence of aristocratic tenure was no longer secure, the use of architectural idioms that forcefully expressed that about which the elite were no longer certain offered a form of symbolic, if not actual, stability.

According to David Cannadine, ‘during the economic and political upheavals of the late nineteenth century, the aristocracy began a financial retrenchment that had an effect on the architectural record left on their estates.’⁵ While it is true that the changing financial situation of the landed classes had an effect on the projects of building undertaken on an estate, the idea of architectural retrenchment for solely financial reasons should not be overstressed: a variety of factors influenced the building patterns of the elite in the period, and the climate of aristocratic Ulster in the nineteenth and twentieth century was hardly one

³ Gervase Jackson-Stops, “Crom Castle, Co. Fermanagh: I”, *Country Life*, 26 May 1988, p.183; Gervase Jackson-Stops, “Crom Castle, Co. Fermanagh: II”, *Country Life*, 2 June 1988, p.144

⁴ Sean O’Reilly, *Irish Houses and Gardens: From the Archives of Country Life*, (London, 1998) p.16

⁵ David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (London, 1992), p.100

of a dearth of architectural patronage. Diverse outside forces, including fashion, social mobility, and especially pre-existing structures, impacted the ways in which the aristocracy changed (or chose not to change) their built environments. One of the central arguments of this chapter is that the Ulster aristocracy of this period were wedded to an historical idea of their architectural heritage, just as they were dedicated to a concept of 'tradition' in their educational and social patterns. This idea of the historic role of the elite was exhibited particularly clearly through the preservation of their built heritage, and through the grounding of new aspects of this heritage in an existing historical tradition. The assumption, therefore, that the aristocracy chose not to spend money on architecture during this time, simply because they rarely rebuilt their homes in their entirety, is fallacious: the primary reason that they rarely rebuilt their homes in Ulster during this period was because most of these families already had ancestral homes on their estates. A group collectively depending on ideological connotations of an idea of historicism and the invented 'traditional' past that supported both their land tenure and their role within local and national government is unlikely to set out on a programme of demolition of those buildings on their estates which already tied them to a historic, landowning past.

Terence Dooley has taken a more measured look at the building record of the aristocracy, recording in the counties that would later form the Republic of Ireland a significant programme of nineteenth-century building that dwindled after about 1905.⁶ Dooley again attributes this to the financial climate and the improvement of the agricultural economy, which enabled elite families to embark on programmes of renovation and redecoration.⁷ According to Dooley, the period that followed the turn of the twentieth century (roughly from 1903 to 1933) 'was perhaps the most catalytic in terms of the decline of the Irish big house,' and his research has shown that the political and economic insecurity felt by the landed classes was documented in their activities on their estates and within their homes.⁸ Dooley's research group consisted, however, solely of aristocratic estates from the 26 southern Irish counties, and he does not engage with the situation for the landed classes of those counties that would form Northern Ireland.

⁶ Dooley, *The Decline of the Big House in Ireland* (Dublin, 2001), p.34

⁷ Cyril Barrett & Jeanne Sheehy, 'Visual Arts and Society, 1900-1921' in W.E. Vaughan (ed.), *A New History of Ireland, VI: Ireland Under the Union, 1870-1921*, (Oxford, 1996), p.493

⁸ Dooley, *The Decline of the Big House in Ireland*, p.144

The work of Cyril Barrett and Jeanne Sheehy, on the other hand, includes Ulster, but supports Dooley's findings more generally, characterising architecture in the north of Ireland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by an emphasis on restraint over display.⁹ Barrett and Sheehy have considered the second half of the nineteenth century as 'a period of large suburban and country house building,'¹⁰ and their research suggests that the late nineteenth-century architectural boom benefited the middle and merchant classes, not the aristocracy. Accordingly, analysis of this period, and especially of the late Irish Gothic Revival style in the north of Ireland, has concentrated on the urban and mercantile classes. Representative of contemporary domestic buildings that have been examined by architectural and cultural historians are homes like Glenveagh Castle and Benburb Manor,¹¹ large country piles conceived by the new urban plutocracy, or mock-Tudor suburban mansions for the well-off middle classes.¹²

The built record on the aristocratic estates of Ulster only supports the research of Dooley, Barrett, and Sheehy to an extent. The architectural commissions of these families were significant in the years before 1900, more so than has been previously recognised. Renovations and redecoration continued after the turn of the twentieth century, no less because of the continuing advances in technology and aesthetic tastes during this time. The rate of building on these estates, however, did decrease, and it would be foolish to assert that finance had no effect on these projects of renovation, although the retrenchment may have been socio-politically, as much as economically, based. The disquiet of the aristocracy of Ulster in the face of their early twentieth century financial and political situation was very real, and is clearly reflected in the rise of inventories commissioned between 1911 and 1914: at Crom Castle the furniture and valuable contents was recorded for insurance purposes in 1914, an occurrence that was mirrored contemporaneously at the Abercorn home in London.¹³ Those aristocrats who were unable to recover their late nineteenth-century losses during the Edwardian boom or take advantage of the high prices of the wartime market found

⁹ Barrett & Sheehy, 'Visual Arts, and Society, 1850-1900' and 'Visual Arts and Society, 1900-1921', in Vaughan, *A New History of Ireland*, VI, p.497

¹⁰ Barrett & Sheehy, 'Visual Arts and Society, 1850-1900', p.468

¹¹ Glenveagh Castle (County Donegal, 1870, designed by John Townshend Trench for Captain John George Adair); Benburb Manor (County Tyrone, 1887, designed by W.H. Lynn for James Bruce)

¹² Cannadine, *The Decline of the Aristocracy*, p.101

¹³ PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1939/27/39. Inventory of various rooms at Crom Castle, 1914; Abercorn Papers, D/623/D/11/10. Inventory of jewels and plate at Hampden House, 1913. D/623/D/11/12. Report on the cellar at Green Street, 1916

themselves even less able to do so in the lean, turbulent years that followed the Great War. This, and the uncertainties of the 1910s and the 1920s, certainly contributed to the diminishing building record of the Ulster aristocracy in the early twentieth century. To neglect the work they did do, however, is to conceal their participation within the world of architectural patronage, and thereby obscure their interaction in the cultural worlds of Britain and Ireland at this time.

The concentration of Barrett and Sheehy's research, and that of their colleagues, on the architectural record of the mercantile classes, and of scholars like Dooley both on the southern counties of Ireland and on the economic aspects of this period diminishes the role the traditional landed classes played in the architectural world during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This area of research has been neglected and is in need of further examination and analysis, of which this work is a beginning. The analysis contained herein has necessarily been guided both by the larger parameters of this study and by the availability of source material for these twelve families, and is therefore specific and limited in scope; it would be complemented by further research on the building practises of the elite in the north of Ireland during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The discussion within this chapter of the building work on the principal Irish homes of these families will be split into two parts. The first section will examine the actual alterations made at these homes as evidence of and reaction to three types of change that occurred in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Firstly, the chapter will look at the way technological change altered the face of the homes of Ulster's elite, especially during the last thirty years of the nineteenth century. Secondly, this examination will analyse how social change (both large-scale societal change and personal/familial alterations) directed the way in which the Ulster country house was used. Finally, the chapter will look at the changes in taste between 1870 and 1925, examining how the alteration of contemporary aesthetics affected the way in which the home was decorated and presented. The second section of this chapter will look at how these alterations were the built manifestations of the larger themes that directed aristocratic life during the transitional period between the 1870s and the 1920s. This analysis will concentrate on the role of historicism and the created past in the creation of aristocratic architecture in the north of Ireland during this period. The rise and continuance of the popularity of the Gothic Revival style up to the twentieth century is indicative of certain cultural intentions among these families, and these are evidenced in their architectural record.

At the same time, these families also tied themselves to the larger community of architectural patronage, especially within Ireland, by their adherence to particular styles, executed by certain proponents of these visual languages, such as the architects William Hague and W.H. Lynn. These two architects shared between them the direction of the four most substantial projects of construction and renovation on these estates during this period, as well as involvement in other projects across the province. By continuing to adhere to the same principles and themes in their architecture as directed their culture in other fields, the aristocracy of Ulster demonstrated a continuity of ideology that directed their social adaptation in every aspect of their lifestyle.

The rapidly-advancing technology and social requirements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries meant that while those families who already had homes on their estates had little need to rebuild, it was necessary to make alterations to accommodate social and technological changes. At a time when building patterns among the aristocracy have been characterised as limited, these necessary upgrades of the elite home constitute substantial alterations made to the architectural record of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This was one of the ways in which the aristocracy of Ulster declared their continuing relevance within the social and cultural worlds of Britain and Ireland. By altering, adapting, and modernising their ancestral homes, they were able to keep pace with the changes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and through these adaptations developed working relationships with those architects, designers, engineers, and craftsmen who were at the centre of aesthetic change in this period.

The elite ‘upgrades’ of this period fall into three general categories: technological, social, and decorative. This chapter will concentrate on these three areas of improvement, examining the changes made in the homes of the elite of Ulster, and looking at how these structural and aesthetic alterations reflected the larger social and cultural currents that shaped the lives of Ulster’s elite at this time. The advances in technology seen especially during the last two decades of the nineteenth century demanded a certain amount of change in the physical structure of the aristocratic home in order to integrate new conveniences, and the updated technologies had clear ramifications on the ways the aristocratic country house was

utilised by the aristocratic family.¹⁴ Nineteenth century installations of lighting, heating, and plumbing changed both the physical form of the house and the ways in which its spaces were used by family, staff, and guests.

This chapter is not, however, about the dissemination of technology or the role of building work on the larger estate: the analysis contained within this chapter is solely concentrated on the work planned and executed on the aristocratic demesne and within the principal homes of these families. The implications of changing technological and social currents for tenantry, employees, and other members of the rural community are not, therefore, looked at within this analysis. Nor are the building works pursued by the elite within their local communities analysed within this work, both because of the distinct principles which directed this sort of interaction with the built environment, and because of the very separate implications which this work had both on the locality and on the aristocratic estate. The analysis in this chapter instead concentrates on the use of the elite home and garden during a time of transition, looking at how the aristocratic owner and his family used their architectural patronage and the changes they chose to make during this period.

At the same time, and partly influenced by contemporary technological changes, the ideology of what constituted the elite home was changing, forcing social changes in the organisation and presentation of the domestic space. This is apparent in the plans and the alterations made to the plans of the service quarters within these homes, which will be highlighted using a comparison between the basement service area at Caledon House in the 1880s, and the installation of new service wings at Rossmore Park, Crom Castle, and Clondeboye House in the 1870s through 1890s. Similarly, the expectations of and for guests also changed during this period. This is reflected in the building record at Crom Castle, where new guest quarters were installed in the 1880s, and where amenities like a billiard and smoking room were created from older spaces. At Castle Leslie, newly built in the 1870s, other social pressures were at work, and the construction of the house was largely due to the heightened status of the family, coinciding with the grant of a hereditary title to Sir John Leslie in 1876. Additionally, even financially beleaguered aristocrats were held (and held themselves) to certain social and aesthetic standards, and the interior furnishings of their

¹⁴ Marilyn Palmer, 'The Country House: Technology and Society', *Industrial Archaeology Review*, XXVII: 1, 2005, p.97

homes were a part of the culture of display which helped secure their roles as leaders of Society. The redecoration of the interior space of the home was a less financially demanding alternative to complete architectural reconstruction, but which still operated as a tool for displaying the necessary knowledge of contemporary aesthetics.

It is important not to delineate between these different sorts of change too forcefully. While the redesign of the service areas at houses like Rossmore Park and Crom Castle was a practical matter for the aristocracy of the late-nineteenth century, incorporating technological changes that eased the work of the staff of the great house, the effort made to keep these reconstructed kitchens, sculleries, dairies, and servants' quarters within the original vocabulary of the house demonstrates that there were aesthetic, as well as practical, principles at work in these renovations. In contrast, the schemes of redecoration embarked on in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were more obviously based on the changing cultural values of the time, but were often forced by the introduction of electric light and other technologies into the home. These changes both required the refinishing of panels and wall spaces where cabling and wires were installed, and encouraged the inhabitants to look at their furnishings, literally, in a different—often less forgiving—light. The social cache that came with a redecorated, up-to-date interior could reflect either the hopes of a family looking to elevate themselves socially or to continue to hold an elevated position, or, as was the case at Castle Leslie in the 1870s, demonstrate the new expectations placed on a family recently entitled. In this way, the influences of technology, society, and fashion on the homes of the aristocracy were mixed, and reflect the complexities of their larger culture during this time.

The Industrial Revolution, indirect creator of the mercantile class which would by the twentieth century largely have displaced the landed classes as Britain and Ireland's wealthy elite and as the premier architectural patrons in the north of Ireland, first had an enormous impact on the homes of the aristocracy, transforming the technical aspects of domestic life, such as lighting, plumbing, and heating.¹⁵ One of the most critical advances made in late-Victorian domestic technology was the introduction of electric light, which began to be installed at houses like Castletwellan in the 1880s.¹⁶ Newly built homes like Castle Leslie had

¹⁵ John Pile, *A History of Interior Design* (London, 2009), p.244

¹⁶ PRONI, Annesley Papers, D/1854/6/7 p.69. 8 Jan 1886

been fitted immediately with the most advanced petrol gaslights and oil lamps available at the time, along with some bathrooms with running water, in the 1870s.¹⁷ These were soon rendered obsolete, but the technologies were not updated for years, often not until the twentieth century. It was therefore some of the older houses which first experienced the advancement of electrical lighting, said to have revolutionised the home interior in the 1880s.¹⁸

In many ways, the installation of electric light solved some of the problems that aristocrats like the marquess of Dufferin had resolved using more ingenious (though characteristically eccentric) methods throughout the previous decades. When Dufferin re-routed the entrance at Clondeboye to incorporate the former kitchen and scullery into a grand hall to house his collection of curiosities, the installation of extra lighting in this area of the house proved to be awkward.¹⁹ In order to solve this problem, both the new entrance and the offices that were installed at the same time were lit by skylights. Ordinarily associated with more utilitarian fields of building, such as greenhouses, or with the constructions of the industrial urban space, like train stations,²⁰ the Marquess proved himself eager to embrace the new, increasingly inexpensive iron and glass constructions. This is indicative of Dufferin's architectural passions in general: where windows could be inserted, at Clondeboye, they were. From the inner hall a flight of stairs led to the Gallery and main rooms, and windows had to be added to allow greater amounts of light to the Gallery.²¹ This time the addition was effective from the inside, but the added windows disrupt the exterior symmetry of Clondeboye's Georgian façade. Harold Nicholson remarked that Dufferin's 'passion for glass roofing was in fact uncontrolled.'²²

At around the same time, more technology dependent on the results of British and Irish industrialisation was installed within the homes of Ulster's aristocracy. At Crom Castle, an elevator was installed in the early 1880s to give access to Lady Erne's bedroom and boudoir

¹⁷ Mark Bence-Jones, *Life in an Irish Country House* (London, 1996), p.68

¹⁸ Mario Praz, *An Illustrated History of Interior Decoration* (London, 1964), p.376

¹⁹ Bence-Jones, *Irish Country Houses*, p.86; Harold Nicolson, *Helen's Tower* (London, 1937), p.188

²⁰ Pile, *A History of Interior Design*, p.248

²¹ Bence-Jones, *Irish Country Houses*, p.86

²² Nicolson, *Helen's Tower*, p.97

from the ground floor.²³ The project, presumably embarked upon because of Lady Erne's limited mobility, was a substantial one, requiring the supervision of both John Craig, the clerk of works at Crom, and a Mr. Johnstone, who specialised in the installation of elevators.²⁴ The project was also for the most part, exceptional: most of the technological alterations made during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the homes of the aristocracy of Ulster were done to update the home, and often embarked on by the newly inherited after a lengthy stasis during the tenure of their predecessors. After the semi-permanent departure of Sir John and Lady Constance Leslie for London in 1906, Jack and Leonie Leslie undertook the redecoration and renovation of Castle Leslie, improving on the antiquated systems put in place in the 1870s. The refit included the installation of bathrooms on every level, central heating in the ground floor and principal rooms of the house, and electric light throughout, thereby reducing the Leslie's service requirement from the previous twelve members of staff to seven.²⁵

It was this contemporaneous adoption of technology and decline in servant numbers that was most indicative of the social climate in the early twentieth century. As the market for labour increased, the demands of servants, as well as employers, had to be considered in the organisation of domestic space. One of the ways the aristocracy secured the allegiance of their staff was by the reorganisation and revamping of the quarters in which they lived and worked. Alterations to the working and sleeping quarters of the staff before the turn of the twentieth century can be seen at houses like Clandeboye, Rossmore Park, and Crom Castle, where changes were made to help employers and employees alike work more efficiently within the country house environment. Other homes retained older plans, such as that seen at Caledon House in the 1880s. The relegation of the servants to the basement was one of the clearest steps in the establishment of the 'upstairs-downstairs' mentality, and this method of domestic organization declined in popularity as the nineteenth century became the twentieth.

A plan of the basement floor at Caledon House shows the service quarters of an aristocratic house in the 1880s, more or less unchanged from the previous generation. The

²³ PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1939/2/24/17. Crom Castle: Lift to Lady Erne's room. Section and plan of lift. Labelled L & MN Railway, Holyhead, via Greenore. Scale 1-inch to 1-foot. Pencil drawing, 56 x 26 cm. Unmounted. 21 May 1880

²⁴ PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1939/2/24/16. Crom Castle: Lift to Lady Erne's room. Two drawings of rooms each side of lift on ground and first floors, 35 x 26 cm and 34 x 26 cm. Unmounted. 24 May 1880

²⁵ Bence-Jones, *Life in an Irish Country House*, p.72

entire floor was dominated by the care of the house and its inmates, including food preparation, heating, and storage, as well as sleeping at least six servants. The plan shows in great detail the layout of the rooms, and it is clear that this area was almost entirely the domain of the servants. Most notable is the absolute dearth of windows: the exterior walls of the basement at Caledon House are lined with passageways, and even within these there are no windows, although the passage nearest the servants hall had a glass roof, which would have admitted some natural light. The lack of windows is partly due to the fact that the basement floor at Caledon was largely underground; regardless, before the advent of electric light and advanced ventilation, the basement quarters would have been dark and stifling, sleeping six servants, and holding many more during the day. The plan does show that by the 1880s, some advances in terms of technology and convenience had been made at Caledon. The basement at Caledon could claim two WCs by the 1880s, and sewage and water pipes run across the entire plan, indicating an abundance of running water and sufficient drainage. The levels of water supply at houses in Ulster were variable: in 1899 Lord Farnham successfully provided a continuous water supply for his household, advancing both the comfort and the safety of his household through the installation of a more reliable system of pumped water and the installation of fire-hydrants,²⁶ while elsewhere, such as at Mountstewart, by 1903 there was only running water in one bathroom, on the ground floor.²⁷

Crucial within the plan of the basement at Caledon are the obvious delineations made between different areas of work, characteristic of the Victorian zeal for categorisation: separate rooms for pickling, bottling, and cellaring are clearly marked on the plan, although it is impossible to know from a simple architectural diagram whether these recommendations were actually followed. What the plan does clearly show is that there was a fairly rigid gender-based separation between the work of the male and female servants: the butler's pantry butts onto the plate room and is situated so as to have easy access to the wine, beer, and bottle cellars, as well as the footman's room and the stores for coal, lamps, and oil. On the other side of the basement, near the kitchen, larder, scullery and pickling room, are the bedrooms of the cook and the kitchen and scullery maids, all near enough to the housekeeper's room to be under her specific control and supervision. The housekeeper's room was, in fact, the only room in the basement with windows, as well as its own store

²⁶ O'Reilly, *Irish Houses and Gardens*, p.10

²⁷ Bence-Jones, *Life in an Irish Country House*, p.198

closet and pantry, probably for the storage of the most expensive spices, linen, and pieces of serving ware.²⁸

By the 1890s, however, this method of staff organization had fallen out of fashion within many country houses, as is evidenced by the alteration and addition of service wings at Rossmore Park, Crom Castle, and Clandeboyne in the 1870s through the 1890s. Sean O'Reilly has noted that even the concept of the raised basement had lost favour by the late nineteenth century in most Irish country houses,²⁹ and it is clear that where servants' quarters were rebuilt or moved after 1870, they were increasingly placed in a separate wing or wings. At Rossmore Park the servants' quarters were revamped under the impetus of Mittie, Lady Rossmore, in the early 1870s. Working with William Hague, Lady Rossmore supervised the construction of a new wing to hold the kitchen and scullery areas, the housekeeper's room and stairs, the maids' rooms, and the laundry, all held within a rusticated, neo-Gothic exterior.³⁰ The alterations at Rossmore Park cost an estimated £1,200 pounds, but this project was by no means the largest-scale contemporary service reconstruction among the Ulster aristocracy.³¹

At Crom, where the lengthy project of slow renovation continued throughout the 1870s to the 1890s, William Hague redesigned the north wing of the Castle, which included the dairy (incorporating a series of related rooms, including a separate kitchen), and the cleaning and brush rooms.³² The major renovation here, which began in 1873, was to expand the former one-storey building with another level, which was designed specifically to hold a maids' gallery for sleeping, complete with a bathroom, and intentionally planned by Hague to sympathise with the existing neo-Gothic structure from the 1830s.³³ In order to do this most effectively, Hague designed the second storey to fit over the original, removing the

²⁸ PRONI, Caledon Papers, D/2433/A/13/52. Caledon House: Plan of Basement Floor, c. 1880s

²⁹ O'Reilly, *Irish Houses and Gardens*, p.151

³⁰ PRONI, Rossmore Papers, T/2929/14/1. Letter from William Hague, 44 Westland Row, Dublin, to Lady Rossmore, 13 August 1876

³¹ PRONI, Rossmore Papers, T/2929/14/3. William Hague, 44 Westland Row, Dublin, to Lady Rossmore, Rossmore Park, 23 Aug 1876

³² PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1939/2/24/9. Crom Castle: Proposed addition to north side of courtyard. Ground plan of north wing of castle. Signed by W. Hague. Scale 1-inch to 5-feet. Pen and wash on brown tracing paper, 63 x 43 cm. Unmounted, c.1873

³³ PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1939/2/24/13. Crom Castle: Upper floor of north wing of castle. Plan of rooms in upper floor of north wing. Unsigned. Ink line drawing. Size of paper 53 x 31 cm. Unmounted, 1873; Jackson-Stops, "Crom Castle, I", p.147

decorative features from the roofline of the original building and replacing them at the roof line of the second storey structure.³⁴

At Clandeboye, where in the 1880s the Marquess of Dufferin experimented with the installation of glass roofing to introduce light into the newly reoriented hall, a series of offices was also installed. Within these offices the Marquess again indulged his passion for skylights: the domestic wing was hidden by a blank wall, and lit from above ‘in the full spirit of the industrial revival,’ according to Nicolson.³⁵ The offices incorporated a selection of specially designed rooms, including a gunroom, a series of stillrooms and storerooms, boot and brush rooms, a servants’ hall and a suite of rooms for both housekeeper and steward, and a laundry, drying room, and linen room.³⁶ The installation of these rooms is indicative of the importance placed on the continued efficiency of the country house, and the crucial role that domestic staff and their labours played in this.

Demonstrative and characteristic of the social influences on the building record of the Ulster aristocracy between 1870 and 1925 are the alterations that were progressively made at Crom Castle between the 1870s and 1890s. Like the family portrait collection, the homes of the privileged acted as material tools for social display and advancement. As David Cannadine has recognised: ‘Works of art, town palaces, and country mansions did not themselves generate revenue: they expressed status. On the other hand, they were expensive to acquire, to create, and to maintain, and they tied up capital that could be realised only by selling.’³⁷ Cannadine rightly emphasises that the aristocratic home was a very expensive, but necessary, social tool, and socially-aware members of the elite recognised this and cared for and presented their aesthetic and environmental heritage accordingly. But what Cannadine is not entirely correct in is this: an aristocratic home could be turned to actual profit on the rental market, and through the social *panache* it offered, indirectly opened opportunities for grand marriages and political sinecures for appropriately placed peers.

³⁴ PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1939/2/24/12. Crom Castle: Proposed addition to north side of courtyard. South elevation. Signed by W. Hague. Scale 1-inch to 5-feet. Pen and wash on brown tracing paper, 63 x 43 cm. Unmounted, c. 1873

³⁵ Nicolson, *Helen’s Tower*, p.97

³⁶ The addition also eventually included a billiards room, a museum, a strong room, and a gentlemen’s cloak-room, demonstrating that the advancing needs of the aristocratic family, as well as those of their arsenal of servants, were on the Marquess’ mind in the 1880s and 1890s. Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, *Clandeboye* (Belfast, 1985), p.25

³⁷ Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, p.121

Concentrating primarily on a rearrangement of the interiors at Crom to better suit the family's lifestyle, the redesign at Crom was executed in three parts, not all mutually related. Refurbishment of the family and guest quarters began in 1877, and under the architectural direction of William Hague changes were instituted in both the north and the southeast wings of the house. Within the north wing Hague constructed a set of bedrooms originally intended for the maids, which would later be converted to family and guest use. Hague's work at Crom during this time also included a redesign of the southeast wing of the Castle in order to reposition the bedrooms located in the gabled attic. The primary concern within these bedrooms seems to be the entrance of light through the windows: both bedrooms (which are functionally identical in Hague's design) are lit by dormer windows in the roof of the wing, and by windows at the end of the gables, while the separate wardrobe rooms were lit by skylights. A note on the plan comments that 'the other wing may be similar', suggesting that the Crichtons also intended to refit the southwest wing at the same time, or in the future.³⁸ In 1880, Hague would redesign the north wing, situating a new billiard room with a smoking alcove where the maid's bedrooms had been, and indulging in this revamped space two of the great passions of the late Victorian gentleman.³⁹

Two later designs at Crom were on a smaller scale, and were supervised by less illustrious builders than Hague. The repositioning of rooms in the east wing in the early 1880s was supervised by J. Craig, the clerk of works at Crom, although his drawings seem to have been copied from an unknown architect's original.⁴⁰ The refit in the east wing (which involved a great deal of routine maintenance, as well as redesign) may have actually been commissioned at the same time as the redesign of the south tower, which was supervised by the Dublin-based architect H.R. Newton.⁴¹ Both of these projects were primarily structural interior redesigns intended to improve the efficiency and comfort of the guest accommodations in the south and east of the Castle, but the care taken to preserve the

³⁸ PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1939/2/24/18. Crom Castle: New bedroom in roofs. Plan and sections for attic bedrooms in south east part of Castle. Signed by Wm. Hague, architect. Scale 1-inch to 4-feet (sections) and 1-inch to 5-feet (plan), 52 x 45 cm. Unmounted, c. 1877-80

³⁹ Gervase Jackson-Stops, 'Crom Castle, Co. Fermanagh: I', *Country Life*, 2 June 1988, p.147

⁴⁰ PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1939/2/24/20. Crom Castle: Alterations to east gallery. Second floor plan of north end of east wing. Signed by R. Craig. Scale 1/4 inch to 1 foot. Pen and wash, 56 x 45 cm. Unmounted, n.d.

⁴¹ PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1939/2/24/22. Crom Castle: South Tower. Elevation and section of the upper floors of the south tower 'showing position on the bars'. Signed HR Newton, architect, 20 Brunswick Street, Dublin. Scale (approx) 1-inch to 6 feet. Pen and wash, 51 x 33 cm. Unmounted, n.d.

existing Gothic detail even in the drawings copied by Craig is important in demonstrating how crucial a sympathetic redesign was to the Crichton family and their architectural employees. This redesign was particularly timely for the Crichtons, who needed the improved guest accommodation and facilities more and more as the nineteenth century progressed. Crom Castle became, from the 1860s, the centre of yachting society on Lough Erne, and the official headquarters of the Lough Erne Yacht Club was situated on the first floor of the earl of Erne's boathouse.⁴² The importance of Lough society will be discussed in this work in relation to the role of yachting as one of the pre-eminent elite sports of the Victorian and Edwardian years, and the position the Crichton family held within Ulster Society was enhanced by their intrinsic connection with the sport. Accordingly, their home became the centre of the elite social world of southern Ulster, and kept their family connected within the wider social world of Britain and Ireland's landed classes.

In the twentieth century the homes of the Ulster aristocracy continued to respond to contemporary social change, reacting to the challenges of twentieth century society. After the Great War the 4th earl of Kilmorey continued the alterations begun by his father at Mourne Park, building an additional single-storey wing to the left of the original entrance front, and reconstituting the entrance so that it ran along the length of this addition, which contained a new drawing room and an entrance hall lit by skylights. The staircase from the original late-Georgian house was re-modelled to complement the new entrance, and was re-oriented to fit the new line of access.⁴³ The addition seems to have largely been intended to allow the earl and countess to put their mark on the property after the long tenure of the 3rd earl and his wife, and alterations were made in the gardens, as well as the house. Primarily, though, the re-routing of the front entrance of Mourne Park to a more relaxed side entrance allowed the alteration of both the level of formality of the home, and the access: the new entrance and landscape refit allowed the addition of a newly laid driveway, offering better access for the increasingly popular automobiles of the 1920s.

Just as social advancement was sometimes encouraged by the restructuring and renovation of the elite home, or wider pre-existing changes were reflected in aristocratic patterns of renovation, reconstruction was also sometimes demanded by significant social

⁴² Jackson-Stops, "Crom Castle, I", p.184

⁴³ Alastair Rowan, *The Buildings of Ireland: North-West Ulster* (Middlesex, 1979), p.218

changes within a family. Of the twelve sample families, only the Leslies completely re-built their home during the period after 1870. There is no coincidence in the fact that the Leslies are also the only family within this sample to have received their title within the period of this study: the change in the status of Sir John Leslie, 1st Baronet, and his family required a greater investment in their home. Sir John began construction on the Castle in the 1870s to replace Glaslough, the seventeenth-century mansion that had housed his forefathers. A variety of influences combined to make the commission of the new Leslie home a necessity in the 1870s: Sir John's advancement was only the first among many factors that encouraged the contract. The building also indulged Sir John's interest in creative aesthetics, as well as appeasing Lady Constance Leslie, Sir John's wife, whose aristocratic expectations had been disappointed by the older house.⁴⁴ Castle Leslie can be seen as the last complete architectural commission of the Ulster Ascendancy: while the house was almost entirely rebuilt during the period under examination, it was fully completed before the ill effects of the agricultural depression began to be felt in the late 1870s. The house was reconstructed in such a way as to emphasise all of the long-standing connections between the Leslie family and their estate, reusing some aspects of the older structure within a style that was, at least in part, deliberately referential to the local Scotch-Irish culture. In its construction and style, Castle Leslie is very much a product of the transitional 1870s: as well as a testament to the last gasp of longevity from the Leslies' seventeenth-century ancestors, the house also demonstrates the economic power of the family at its zenith.

The most common alteration in any home during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was in the interior décor. Toby Barnard has recognised the importance of interiors as a part of the whole of the elite home from the seventeenth century onwards, crediting these schemes both with the power to make a greater impression than exterior grandeur, and with the means to more quickly be transformed, thereby offering a clearer picture of changing tastes and fashions.⁴⁵ The analysis of interiors provides the historian with a particular set of limitations, however, more so than many other forms of historic aesthetics. The sources used for the analysis of an interior are subject to greater biases than most: the examination of a historic place is dependent on numerous sources of varying reliability: photographs, which can be—and frequently were—staged; inventories, which often had some aspects left out as

⁴⁴ Anita Leslie, *The Gilt and the Gingerbread: An Autobiography* (London, 1981), p.14

⁴⁵ Barnard, *Making the Grand Figure*, p.79

unsellable or kept for relatives in the case of a death; or remaining interior schemes, which have suffered a hundred years or more of change. The alteration of interiors did, however, play an important part in the architectural record of the Ulster aristocracy during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and therefore these manifestations of taste and investment need to be examined accordingly, if with a consciousness of the historical limitations of this type of material. These alterations will be looked at chronologically, tracing these changes in aesthetics as they were expressed in the interiors of the country houses in the north of Ireland from the 1870s to the 1920s, beginning with the building and furnishing of Castle Leslie's Italianate interiors through late Victorian alterations at Crom Castle, Baronscourt, and Castlewella, through to changes that began to be made in the twentieth century in the principal rooms at homes like Mount Stewart and Mourne Park.

When Castle Leslie was reconstructed, the library and the billiard room were allowed to remain from the original seventeenth-century house, connected to the main block of the house by a cloister designed in the Italian Renaissance style, possibly by Sir John himself. A number of sources attribute the inspiration for the cloister at Glaslough to the interior cloister at Santa Maria degli Angeli e dei Martiri in Rome, designed by Michelangelo around 1561.⁴⁶ The simplicity of the Italian inspiration of the cloister is echoed in the architectural interior of the Castle's Great Hall, which features a similar, shallow, barrel-vaulted ceiling (here somewhat aggrandised with a dentil cornice) and grey marble Ionic columns.⁴⁷ It is within the gallery lined by the cloister where John Leslie's artistic ambitions most clearly take decorative form and his connection to the house can be most clearly seen. The gallery is top lit, so as to not interrupt the series of frescoes painted by Sir John that decorate the walls. *Trompe-l'oeil* family portraits (framed to mimic canvas portraits) and pre-Raphaelite angels line the walls of the gallery, divided by arches.⁴⁸ The other wing of the cloister is glazed to form a conservatory, which runs from the head of the gallery to the main block of the house.

The style of Castle Leslie from the 1870s says much about the family and their roots. The Leslie fortune (though landed) was newer than the rest of the families in this sample, as

⁴⁶ Bence-Jones, *Irish Country Houses*, p.71; Jeremy Williams, *A Companion Guide to Architecture in Ireland, 1837-1921* (Dublin, 1994), p.318. While there are clear similarities in the structure, these could be found between the Leslie cloister and any number of simply adorned high-Renaissance cloisters found throughout Italy.

⁴⁷ Bence-Jones, *Irish Country Houses*, p.71

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p.72

was their title, and this is expressed in the existence of a very different tenor within their home. The differences can be clearly pointed up by a comparison with Baronscourt around the same time, where the aristocratic version of High Victorian style still reigned supreme in the principal rooms. At Baronscourt we can see an illustration of many of the principal trends of this period: texture, patterns and a mass of objects demand attention from the viewer in this image, from 1880, demonstrating the influence of both modern tastes on the aristocratic home, as well as traditions of Irish design.⁴⁹ John Pile has characterized Victorian design as rooted in a proliferation of multiple types of decorative ornamentation, in evidence here in the valanced curtains, fringed stools, multiple tables of various sizes, and sculptural shades on the oil lamps, as well as on the carving on the furniture, the pattern on the carpet, and the architecturally decorative features of the room itself.⁵⁰ The wall décor and artistic treasures in the room also reflect this taste in their display: the paintings are so numerous that they almost obscure the surface of the walls, and they compete with mirrors, paneling, and tallboy display cases for surfaces to which they may cling. Within the room, more art objects are presented within display cases and on pedestals. The dominance of patterned upholstery in this interior—covering chairs, footstools, sofas, tables, screens—is indicative both of the prevailing Victorian taste and of the role upholstery had long played in Irish homes as a means by which magnificence could be expressed; textiles were the primary decorative elements in seventeenth-century Irish homes, and remained that way until well into the twentieth century.⁵¹ In part, the colour schemes and patterns of the Victorian era were practical: coal and peat fires, gas lamps, and other nineteenth century forms of heating and lighting were messy, and the darker tones and complex weaves of these pieces were better able to hide marks, just as the profusion of small rugs were able to be moved around to obscure stains on the carpets.⁵²

Also characteristic of Victorian style in Ireland was the growth of specialist room types, most notably the billiard room, associated—especially within the circle of the peers in the north of Ireland—with convivial manly chats, practical jokes, and the informal forging of relationships that would later be carried into the Carlton Club, or on to the House of

⁴⁹ Gervase Jackson-Stops, 'Baronscourt, Co. Tyrone: I', *Country Life*, 26 July 1979, p.234

⁵⁰ Pile, *A History of Interior Design*, p.251

⁵¹ Pile, *A History of Interior Design*, p.267; Barnard, *Making the Grand Figure*, p.85

⁵² Kate Arber, *Turn of the Century Style: Home Decoration and Furnishings Between 1890 and 1910* (Middlesex, 2003), p.5

Commons. The billiard and smoking room at Crom Castle was created in 1880 from the alteration of the north wing, which had been extended to form staff bedrooms in 1873. This sort of alteration—re-purposing an existing room to create a space for the Victorian hobby of billiards—became common in these homes. A similar rearrangement occurred at Florence Court in the 1880s, when the pavilion which had formerly housed the earl's fossil collection became the family billiard saloon.⁵³ Hague's original plans offer two options for the decoration of this room.⁵⁴ Of these, the Crichtons seem to have preferred the more Gothic of the two options, although both belie a certain amount of neo-Classical influence. The room was eventually fitted with wood paneling, a ribbed barrel-vaulted ceiling with decorative crests in plaster, columned window and door architraves, and a moulded plaster mantelpiece.⁵⁵ Here, unlike in the drawing room, furnishings were minimal, again dictated by the demands of the game itself. Elsewhere at Crom, however, the decorative scheme implemented in the mid-1880s reflects a similarity of taste as seen at Baronscourt.

In 1884-6 the earl of Erne hired William Hague to return to Crom Castle in order to renovate and reorganize the principal rooms at the south front of the house in what was then termed the Italian style.⁵⁶ This suite included the Dining Room, Saloon, and Library of the 1840s, and could be opened up into one long room through double doors connecting the three. The rooms were united by a Jacobethan ceiling with quatrefoil cornicing, which ran from the dining room, through the saloon, and into the library.⁵⁷ This ingenuity is reflective of the ways rooms in country houses were used in Ireland throughout the modern era: Barnard has recognised that the names of rooms did not always reflect their true purpose, and rooms intended for entertainment, like this suite at Crom, had to function equally well for informal parties of family and guests as for formal balls and soirees.⁵⁸ Here, the original purpose of the rooms was readjusted to suit changes in entertaining and family life, as well as

⁵³ PRONI, Introduction to the Enniskillen Papers, p.25

⁵⁴ PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1939/2/24/14. Crom Castle: proposed alteration to the upper floor of the north wing. Unsigned. Scale 1-inch to 5-feet. Pen and wash on brown tracing paper, 65 x 45 cm (torn in two pieces). Unmounted, c.1877-80

⁵⁵ PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1939/2/24/15. Crom Castle: View of Billiard Room interior. A "rough suggestive sketch of interior of proposed new billiard room for the Rt. Hon the Earl of Erne." Unsigned. Pen and wash on brown tracing paper, 41 x 39 cm. Unmounted, c.1877-80

⁵⁶ Williams, *Architecture in Ireland*, p.201

⁵⁷ Jackson-Stops, 'Crom Castle, I', p.146

⁵⁸ Barnard, *Making the Grand Figure*, p.84,96

the increasing compartmentalisations and specialisations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In essence, the general function of these rooms was the same: they remained rooms for entertainment, from 1886 including two drawing rooms and a library. The classicised 'Blue' Drawing Room, adapted from the house's original library, was embellished by a screen of scagliola marble columns, while the original Gothicised Jacobethan-style fireplace and bookcases from this room were moved at this time to the west wing of the Castle, forming a new Library in what had been the original drawing room.⁵⁹ The saloon, from the 1880s referred to as the Yellow Drawing Room, was embellished with a neo-Classical frieze and a survival of the demolition of a house in Dublin: a late eighteenth-century white marble chimneypiece by sculptor Pietro Bossi, whose work in Ireland is associated with the technique of inlaying scagliola with white marble.⁶⁰

The inspiration of these Italianate interiors, created in 1884-6, still owes a great deal to the late-Gothic style in which Hague often worked and in which the Castle had originally been decorated; as a pupil of J.J. McCarthy (seen by Jeanne Sheehy as the Irish heir to A.W. Pugin's work),⁶¹ Hague was wedded to his Gothic Revival training, as well as tied to the foundation of the Castle's style. But overwhelmingly, these rooms appear Victorian in their style, exhibiting what Mario Praz has termed 'non-style': a melding of multiple different styles within individual rooms and homes, and seen as characteristic of late Victorian décor.⁶² The interiors in these rooms, as evidenced by photographs from the 1880s, were ornate in the classic Victorian style and evoke the contemporary drawing room at Baronscourt:⁶³ a numberless selection of upholstered surfaces in a variety of patterns and fabrics compete for the gaze with gilt frames, painted and upholstered screens, potted plants, urns, paintings, and tasselled footstools, almost obscuring the equally complex architectural features of the room, which included detailed cornicing and plasterwork, carved mantelpieces, and tiled fire-surrounds.

⁵⁹ Jackson-Stops, 'Crom Castle, II', pp.144, 146-7

⁶⁰ Rowan, *Buildings of Ireland*, p.223; Jackson-Stops, 'Crom Castle, I', p.146

⁶¹ Barrett & Sheehy, 'Visual Arts, 1850-1900' in Vaughan, *A New History of Ireland*, p.461; Jeanne Sheehy, *J.J. McCarthy and the Gothic Revival in Ireland* (Belfast, 1977)

⁶² Mario Praz, *An Illustrated History of Interior Decoration* (London, 1964), p.368

⁶³ Jackson-Stops, 'Crom Castle, I', p.147

During the 1880s, technology rapidly changed the way in which the home was used, as has been discussed already in reference to the advances made at house like Castle Leslie, Castlewellan, and Clandeboye in lighting and sewage. In her examination of technological changes in country houses, Marilyn Palmer has recognised the difference that improved lighting may have also made for evening entertainment, allowing visitors to more clearly see the decorative features of the ornate aristocratic home.⁶⁴ What Palmer has not considered, however, is the unexpected effect bright electric lighting may have had on a less-than-fresh scheme of interior décor: while there is no concrete evidence to demonstrate that the aristocracy found themselves obliged to redecorate when the threadbare aspects of their home-wares were exposed by electricity, this cannot be ignored as an aspect both in encouraging decorative change, and in the development of new decorative styles that were better suited to the new methods of lighting. At Castlewellan, this may have been the case, as the principal rooms in the house were redecorated in the late 1880s, following the installation of electric light in the house in 1886.⁶⁵

Within the décor at Castlewellan there are clear indicators of the contemporary trends in home interiors among the massing of traditionally Victorian textiles, carved furnishing, and potted plants, including the influence of the arts and crafts movement and the prevalence of Asian, or Asian-style, textiles and furnishings. Until it was destroyed during the 1939-1945 occupation of the Castle, the drawing room was hung with a leaf-printed wallpaper designed by William Morris that had been installed in the 1880s.⁶⁶ Wallpaper began to be used in Ireland in the first half of the eighteenth century, gaining in popularity throughout the next hundred and fifty years.⁶⁷ There are, of course, ironies in the use of Morris' wallpaper, based on his Arts and Crafts ideals of 'functional simplicity', in such an elaborate room as the parlour at Castlewellan, where Turkish rugs, Asian vases, and the heads and horns of various hunted beasts stood as decorative testaments to the imperial and military travels of members of the Annesley family. Trends in Orientalist and *chinois* styles of décor, evidenced in the butterfly-embroidered Chinese silk curtains that hung in the Castlewellan drawing

⁶⁴ Palmer, 'The Country House', p.102

⁶⁵ PRONI, Annesley Papers, D/1854/6/7, p.69. 8 Jan 1886

⁶⁶ PRONI, Annesley Papers, T/3774/4/1, T/3774/3. Photocopied family albums, c. 1873-1883; Charlotte Gere and Lesley Hopkins, *The House Beautiful: Oscar Wilde and the Aesthetic Interior* (London, 2000), pp.47-50

⁶⁷ Barnard, *Making the Grand Figure*, p.94

room, became popular during the 1880s, although interest in these styles can be seen from the mid-eighteenth century.⁶⁸ Japanese styles—*japonaiserie*—were born out of this earlier interest, and the increased access Western traders had to Japan after the re-opening of the country in 1854. By 1878 the passion for *japonaiserie* was so widespread that it was no longer considered a fashion by one critic, but an ‘infatuation, a folly.’⁶⁹

In 1900, Castlewellan was featured in a new journal, *Country Life*, which had been launched in 1897. According to Sean O’Reilly, the article was indicative of the tenor of the new magazine in its infancy. The house itself was very lightly treated, reflecting the architectural preferences of *Country Life* at the turn of the century: the baronial mansion ‘belonged to that curious middle period, neither old enough nor sufficiently recent to interest *Country Life*’s readership.’ The coverage was principally directed at the garden, although here O’Reilly has recognised *Country Life*’s biases: there is no history of the garden, and the article neglects to mention either the conservatories, or the fountains, both of which were exceptional examples of a mid-century type.⁷⁰ For the earl and countess of Annesley, however, this sort of coverage was new, and is clearly an aspect of the wider use of the media by the aristocracy, especially the aristocracy of Ulster, during this period. For the coverage in *Country Life*, the earl gave a tour of the gardens, while the countess of Annesley shows the journalist around the house. The article is an explicit promotion by the family of the house and estate as a part of Britain and Ireland’s heritage, demonstrating both their awareness of its value and the importance of these new forms of media during the early twentieth century.

Around the same time, structural, as well as social and technological, changes were also influencing alterations to the homes of the elite. Newly created rooms, as well as those which had been altered or enlarged, also required decoration, as occurred at Clandeboy in the 1890s. In 1898 the dining room was refitted with new chairs, paper, hangings, and carpet. Lord Dufferin had difficulties with some of his more imaginative re-designs: in the new outer-hall he enjoyed commissioning a papier-mâché replica of an Elizabethan ceiling for

⁶⁸ PRONI, Annesley Papers, T/3774/4/1, T/3774/3. Photocopied family albums, c. 1873-1883; Gere and Hopkins, *The House Beautiful*, pp.47-50; Pile, *A History of Interior Design*, p.267; Barnard, *Making the Grand Figure*, pp.99-100

⁶⁹ Praz, *An Illustrated History of Interior Decoration*, p.376

⁷⁰ O’Reilly, *Irish Houses & Gardens*, p.10

décor, but struggled to find a carpet of the appropriate irregular shape and size.⁷¹ While the 1st marquess of Dufferin had originally intended to completely redesign the loosely neo-Classical Clandeboye as a neo-Gothic construction, his intentions outweighed his purse, and the alterations at Clandeboye were commissioned gradually during the last thirty years of the nineteenth century. The primary alteration made by Dufferin was the movement of the entrance from the south front of the house to the west, which allowed the former hall, entrance area, and study to be knocked together into a new, neo-Classical library. While Harold Nicolson's enthusiasm for his uncle's architectural plans was often muted, for the family it seems the new library—light, comfortable, and decorated with Classically inspired bookcases dedicated in gilded lettering to the Greek pantheon—was a success, and Nicolson describes it as 'one of the pleasantest rooms on earth.'⁷² The newly refitted entrance hall was a manifestation of Lord Dufferin's fascination with the Middle Ages, and contained within it a collection of armour.⁷³ This, as well as the project in which he refit a series of domestic buildings near the house as an old-fashioned banqueting hall, is indicative of the direction in which Lord Dufferin would have taken Clandeboye had he the means.⁷⁴ Elsewhere, the mix of neo-Classical, as found in the Clandeboye library, and Gothic Revival, as evidenced in the hall and banqueting room, was further elaborated. In the newly created chapel, the entrance was described by Nicolson as 'a smaller and more Celtic version of the portal of San Michele at Pavia.' This Italian-Celtic hybrid entrance led into an interior that indulged a Baroque vision of the medieval grandeur that Dufferin had hoped to instil in his main house, lavish with oil paintings, velvet upholstery, and elaborately carved furnishings.⁷⁵ The Marquess' travels in Italy may have influenced some of his tastes: between 1888 and 1891 he served as the British Ambassador to Italy, and the years spent in Rome clearly imparted the styles of that city into his creations at Clandeboye. But overall, the interiors at Clandeboye—whether Baroque, Gothic, Classical, or a combination of all three—are indicative of the tendency of the aristocracy of the late nineteenth century to engage in the prevailing currents of eccentric Victorian 'non-style'. Saddled with homes already coloured by generations of aesthetic choices, these families chose to add to existing Gothic or Classically-inspired interiors

⁷¹ PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/M/1/24. 1st marquess of Dufferin and Ava to Lady Hermione Blackwood, 9 February 1898

⁷² Nicolson, *Helen's Tower*, p.97

⁷³ Mark Girouard, *The Return To Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven, 1981), p.80

⁷⁴ Nicolson, *Helen's Tower*, p.251

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, pp.248-9

indiscriminately, forming a pastiche of styles that reflects the wider currents in late-nineteenth century aesthetics and society.

Roughly contemporary reconstructions at Mourne Park were similarly conservative and indicative of the social climate and the attitudes of the Ulster aristocracy at the time. Around the turn of the century the 3rd earl of Kilmorey added a series of rectangular bows to the entrance front at Mourne Park, which was already characterised by its distinctive paired rectangular windows within a façade that was neo-Classical in its inspiration, if not technically so in its details.⁷⁶ At this time the earl also added a long, single storey wing at the back of the house, called the Long Room. The addition was constructed using a vaulted ceiling with timber supports, and was used for larger scale entertaining: it is, in form as well as function, a banqueting room, sharing in detail and inspiration much with the hall built ten years before at Clandeboye.⁷⁷ As a symbol of the grandeur and open-handed generosity of the aristocracy toward their peers and tenantry, the banqueting hall was used to emphasise their historical place and an effort to thereby secure their future role within the social structure of the nation. At Clandeboye, as well as within earlier schemes at Crom Castle, the influence of medieval traditions could be clearly seen at homes that claimed no conscious neo-Gothic inspiration. The design of those homes that do display the stylistic traits of the altered Gothic were clearly influenced by traditions of neo-Classical building,⁷⁸ so the social emphasis on ideals of *noblesse oblige* and Medieval hospitality and chivalry crept into the designs of the neo-Classical aristocratic home.

In wider British and Irish society, the period between the 1890s and the 1900s was crucial in terms of stylistic change, as the design world began to throw off the Victorian stylistic conventions of its forefathers and to embrace the more austere and streamlined styles that would characterise Edwardian and early twentieth century design. This distaste for their predecessors is evident in the treatment of nineteenth century homes in *Country Life* magazine, as well as in the preference for the Georgian over the Victorian in the historical and architectural scholarship of the twentieth century. For the aristocratic families of the

⁷⁶ Bence-Jones, *A Guide to Irish Country Houses*, p.218

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p.218

⁷⁸ At Crom Castle, the Gothic decoration, asymmetrical entrance tower, and Tudor-inspired garden-front are supported by an entirely symmetrical plan of neo-Classical inspiration. See: Bence-Jones, *Irish Country Houses*, p.95; Devon M. McHugh, 'Family Identity and the Irish Ascendancy Gentry: The Saundersons of Castle Saunderson, 1613-1914' (MPhil, University of Edinburgh, 2006), pp.87-91; PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1939/2/24/11

north of Ireland, however, these changes were slow to take effect. Within the interior schemes of these country houses twentieth century décor does not seem to have gained a foothold until the 1920s. This may be reflective of a larger trend recognised by Barnard in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁷⁹ Like their forebears, Ulster's aristocrats were not in the vanguard of taste in interiors, instead preferring to continue with the comfort of the known Victorian interior, and hesitant to disturb the massing of furnishings, *objets de art*, and ancestral collections which filled their homes. In 1903 Mountstewart was 'tidied up' in anticipation of a royal visit by King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra, a renovation which was indicative of the slow pace of change within elite interiors at the time. Alterations were made that indicate the changes in the way rooms were used: the former billiard room, that symbol of the Victorian gentleman, was converted into a large sitting room, complete with a very Edwardian assortment of newly-upholstered chairs, palms, and screens.⁸⁰ Later, the décor at Mountstewart after the turn of the century was described by Lady Fingall as full of 'screens and little cosy nooks.'⁸¹ This description suggests that the newly appointed room may have been influenced by Queen Anne Style, a late-nineteenth century decorative movement characterised by richly decorative interiors and asymmetrical spaces with nooks and bays.⁸² The emphasis on comfort and charm within this style suited the intentions of the marquess and marchioness of Londonderry in redecorating their home, and while Queen Anne Style did mark a change in aesthetics, it was not a revolutionary departure from the Victorian norm, suited both to conservative temperaments and to redesigns like that at Mount Stewart, which primarily concentrated on the re-upholstery of the existing furniture, and rearrangement of the rooms to better suit contemporary social life.⁸³

Evidence of the twentieth century reaction against the norms of Victorian design is not clear within the north of Ireland's aristocratic homes until after the Great War, when at Mount Stewart the 7th marquess and marchioness of Londonderry were among those who patronised the new, more sleekly executed style.⁸⁴ The house was used as a convalescent home during the conflict, and accordingly modernised and redecorated afterward, a period

⁷⁹ Barnard, *Making the Grand Figure*, p.85

⁸⁰ Bence-Jones, *Irish Country House*, p.198

⁸¹ *ibid.*, p.200

⁸² Pile, *A History of Interior Design*, p.254

⁸³ Bence-Jones, *Irish Country House*, p.198

⁸⁴ Pile, *A History of Interior Design*, p.255

during which, because of the marquess' involvement with the government of Northern Ireland, the Londonderrys spent more time at Mount Stewart than they had previously. However, the alterations were quite superficial: even into the 1930s Mount Stewart still could not claim the luxury of running water in the upstairs bathrooms,⁸⁵ a comfort that may be more indicative of the Londonderry ability to pay the necessary retinue of staff than a financial limitation which kept them from affording the installation of pipes and drainage above the ground floor. The scheme was suitably changed, however, to prompt a response from the dowager marchioness, who on seeing the new décor remarked: 'Some people like to live in a barrack. I don't.'⁸⁶

During this period social, technological, and aesthetic changes can also be seen influencing the design of the parklands and demesne outside the homes of Ulster's aristocracy, including at Mount Stewart, which saw a massive programme of landscaping shortly after the redecoration of the interiors. Garden alterations were fairly common during this period, although many alterations seem to have gone unrecorded by these families, especially in the case of smaller alterations to the parkland. The record does show that changes were made at Baronscourt in 1876 under the direction of Ninian Niven,⁸⁷ and later at Mourne Park, where after the Great War, the garden was re-landscaped under the direction of the countess of Kilmorey to suit the new line of entrance.⁸⁸ The plan at Mourne Park combined a plan of symmetry and rigid simplicity with imaginative bed-shapes and rare specimens, the result commanding the eye of visitors to the estate.⁸⁹

These projects, which were part of a wider tradition of garden alteration, reflected a practice in Ireland and Britain of changes to the elite demesne as a form of landlord improvement,⁹⁰ and this interaction between the aesthetic desires of the family and their responsibilities to the locality are evidenced in two of the largest projects embarked on during this period, at Castlewellan in the 1880s through early twentieth century, and at Mountstewart in the 1920s. As Alvin Jackson has recognised, the alteration of gardens and

⁸⁵ Bence-Jones, *Irish Country House*, p.204

⁸⁶ H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Londonderrys: A Family Portrait* (London, 1979), p.132

⁸⁷ Jackson-Stops, 'Baronscourt, I', p.163

⁸⁸ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/J/3. Rough plan by the 4th earl of Kilmorey of a garden layout to correspond with the forthcoming extension to Mourne Park, 1919

⁸⁹ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/D/12/1-9. "Mourne Park, a sketch by M.E. Russell"

⁹⁰ Alvin Jackson, *Colonel Edward Saunderson: Land and Loyalty in Victorian Ireland* (Oxford, 1995), p.191; W.E. Vaughan, *Landlords and Tenants in Mid-Victorian Ireland* (Oxford, 1994), p.121

parkland was reflective of the social climate, a sign both of landed confidence and of extraneous agricultural labour: gardens were an investment in the people on the estate as much as they were in the estate itself.⁹¹ However, the newly created garden was not always, as Jackson has characterized it, 'an economic liability.'⁹² for families like the Abercorns, Annesleys, Kilmoreys, and Londonderrys, the beautifying of the estate was a social investment. The entertainment schedules and activities of the aristocracy in Ulster demanded as much from the demesne as from the house itself, and by placing their homes within attractive surroundings, these families were assuring that the message communicated to visitors to their home was clear. Gardens, as much as drawing rooms or well-stocked game covers, were a reflection of aristocratic taste and magnificence.

At Castlewellan, the improvements to the demesne also went farther, helping to secure a modest income from timber as well as a place for the earl among leading amateur botanists of the time. The investment scheme conducted by Hugh Annesley, 5th earl Annesley, are the largest scale system of any in evidence on the aristocratic estates in the north of Ireland between 1870 and 1925. The work at Castlewellan was a part of a continuum of Annesley work on the estate, and it was not solely the project of the 5th earl. The gardens were first laid out in 1730-1740, primarily under the direction of Francis Charles Annesley, whose mark was left both in the house in the form of a portrait over the stairs, and in the gardens, where rows of beech trees ran from the house to the lake, and mature limes formed an avenue to the stables.⁹³ The gardens were then significantly altered between 1875 and 1908 by the 5th earl, whose attentions were dedicated to the plants throughout the estate and in the glasshouses, which were filled with prized orchids.⁹⁴ Annesley concentrated primarily on the rehabilitation of the estate garden at Castlewellan and the improvement of the forested land on the estate, now Castlewellan Forest Park. Money that would ordinarily have been spent on the improvement of the house, the education of the children, and the leisure of the aristocrat was instead concentrated at Castlewellan on creating what is now one of the finest

⁹¹ Jackson, *Colonel Edward Saunderson*, p.192

⁹² *ibid.*, p.192

⁹³ Reverend Francis Annesley, of Castlewellan, father of the 1st Viscount Glerawly, and grandfather of his namesake, Francis Charles Annesley, 1st earl Annesley. Lady Mabel Annesley, *As the Sight is Bent*, edited by Constance Malleson (London, 1964), p.32

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p.18

arboretums in Northern Ireland, with an extensive collection of rare shrubs and trees, a series of partially man-made lakes, and an elaborate system of access roads.⁹⁵

Lady Mabel Annesley remarked on the contrast between the commercial scale of her father's forestry pursuits and his manner, which was that of 'a giant landscape gardener,'⁹⁶ and this combination of grand scale and amateur methods seems to have been characteristic of the improvements of many aristocrats during this time, both in terms of their estate and agricultural works, and their architectural commissions. Despite his amateur status, Lord Annesley was remarkably organised in his planting, and privately published lists of the plants in existence at Castlewellan survive for much of the 1890s.⁹⁷ Certainly, gardening and forestry became integrated with his other hobbies, especially photography, and the earl began forming albums of portraits of special trees in the early 1880s.⁹⁸ By the early twentieth century the pursuit was consuming enough for the earl to assemble and publish a book on the matter, *Beautiful and Rare Trees and Plants* (1902). Yet the evidence of his background is clear even in these works. His plant lists from the 1890s are published with a quotation from Sir Walter Scott as the preface: 'There is no art or occupation comparable to planting. It is full of past, present, and future enjoyment.'⁹⁹ Photographs of exotics and trees in the gardens often include the presence of an Annesley family member to provide scale. The Annesley family, however, took the 5th earl's hobby sufficiently seriously to continue it into the next two generations, and a number of species were added to the collection (especially by the 7th earl) in the years after the Second World War.¹⁰⁰

The earl was able to take advantage of the mild climate of County Down to plant such succulents and exotics as yucca, a pattern which was later echoed in the plantings at Mourne Park and at Mount Stewart in the twentieth century, where exotics also formed a part of the botanical collection.¹⁰¹ The garden redesign at Mount Stewart had both social and aesthetic

⁹⁵ Lady Constance Malleon, *After Ten Years* (London, 1931), p.14

⁹⁶ Annesley, *As the Sight is Bent* p.12

⁹⁷ PRONI, Annesley Papers, D/1854/10/1. List of Plants in the Garden at Castlewellan, County Down, 1890; Annesley Papers, D/1854/10/2A-B. Two Lists of Plants in the Garden at Castlewellan, County Down, 1894; Annesley Papers, D/1854/10/3. List of Plants in the Garden at Castlewellan, County Down, 1897; Annesley Papers, D/1854/10/4. List of Plants in the Garden at Castlewellan, County Down 1900

⁹⁸ PRONI, Annesley Papers, T/3774/4/2. Photograph albums, c.1880s

⁹⁹ PRONI, Annesley Papers, D/1854/10/1. List of Plants in the Garden at Castlewellan, County Down, 1890

¹⁰⁰ Annesley, *As the Sight is Bent*, p.32n

¹⁰¹ PRONI, Annesley Papers, D/1854/10/1. List of Plants in the Garden at Castlewellan, County Down, 1890; Annesley Papers, D/1854/10/2A-B. Two Lists of Plants in the Garden at Castlewellan, County

motivations, and better conforms to Jackson's analysis of estate investment. The replanting was under the direction of Edith, marchioness of Londonderry, reflecting a widespread Victorian tendency to associate the gardens of a home with the female better than the dominance of the earl in the planting schemes at Castlewellan.¹⁰² There were more recognizable paternalist motives at work at Mount Stewart, as well: in the interest of setting an example for the locality, especially as the marquess was serving within the government of Northern Ireland during the early 1920s, the Londonderrys swiftly complied with the a request from Belfast that local landowners employ extra labourers to alleviate the social and economic strain of demobilization.¹⁰³ But as the Marchioness herself admitted, the assignment of twenty of these men to the estate also gave her 'the opportunity to plan and make the grounds surrounding the house not only more cheerful and liveable, but beautiful as well.'¹⁰⁴

As at Castlewellan, the climate on the estate and in the locality allowed non-native plants, such as rhododendrons, bamboos, and other tropical species, to flourish, as did Lady Londonderry's aesthetic and social, as well as horticultural, preferences, especially in the walled gardens and terraces. The Dodo Terrace famously featured a statuesque homage to her Great War-era social circle, The Ark, while the one of the *parterres* included appropriately-coloured plantings which depicted the Red Hand of Ulster.¹⁰⁵ Even after the interior renovations of the post-war years, she described Mountstewart as 'the dampest, darkest and saddest place,' emphasizing how very superficial the changes to the house after the Great War were.¹⁰⁶ The creation of the garden offered her a distraction both from the disappointments of Mountstewart's interiors and from the social and political difficulties of the 1920s, as well as re-emphasising the important role the Londonderrys played in the rural Down economy.

Down, 1894; Annesley Papers, D/1854/10/3. List of Plants in the Garden at Castlewellan, County Down, 1897; Annesley Papers, D/1854/10/4. List of Plants in the Garden at Castlewellan, County Down, 1900

¹⁰² Jackson, *Colonel Edward Saunderson*, p.191

¹⁰³ Edith, marchioness of Londonderry, *Mount Stewart* (Belfast, 1956), p.5

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p.5

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p.9

¹⁰⁶ Jackson, *Colonel Edward Saunderson*, pp.191-2; Hyde, *The Londonderrys*, p.242; Anne de Courcy, *Circe: The Life of Edith, Marchioness of Londonderry* (London, 1992) pp.159-161

The dominance of the neo-Classical and neo-Gothic schools in country house building lasted well into the twentieth century. Primarily, those houses that were constructed before the 1830s were neo-Classical in design, including the famous examples at Florence Court and Castle Coole, as well as the Londonderry home at Mount Stewart, the home of the earls of Caledon at Caledon, and the homes of the Dufferins at Clondeboy and the Kilmoreys at Mourne Park. The style was characteristic of the height of Ascendancy power in Ireland, and the symmetry and grandeur of these palatial homes spoke volumes about the security and power of the Irish aristocracy during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, and their desire to articulate this sense of wellbeing. The aristocratic homes constructed after the first quarter of the nineteenth century were primarily built in a style that gained increasing popularity throughout the century: the neo-Gothic, or Gothic Revival. Crom Castle, Castlewellan, Dawson's Grove, and Rossmore Park, built between the 1830s and the 1860s, are all reflective of this new direction in architectural inspiration. Like the neo-Classical style popular in the previous century, Gothic Revival was not only decorative, but was a product of its time. Aristocrats building in the increasingly popular style asserted (or invented) through the asymmetrical forms and 'Medieval' decorative features of their homes a historic connection to the land, as well as demonstrating their complex and traditional understanding of their rights and responsibilities as landlords and protectors. In the insecure climate of mid-nineteenth century political and economic change, aristocrats chose to use the language of the Gothic Revival to emphasise their traditional and historic role within agrarian society. However, as has been seen in the interiors of these homes, these styles were rarely used exclusively, and both revivalist schools influenced the architecture of Ulster's aristocracy.

These peers were hardly Ireland's first historically-minded landowners, and in many ways the revivalism of the late-nineteenth century was a part of the longer tradition of antiquarianism examined by Clare O'Halloran, and recognised already in the much more comprehensively studied Celtic and literary revivals of the late nineteenth century.¹⁰⁷ The direct heir of these eighteenth-century enthusiasts may have been the 4th earl of Belmore, who prepared a series of articles for publication on the subject of pre-Stuart and plantation

¹⁰⁷ Clare O'Halloran, *Golden Ages and Barbarous Nations: Antiquarian Debate and Cultural Politics in Ireland, 1750-1800* (Cork, 2004)

architecture, tracing in photographs and writings the architectural heritage that made the architectural style of these homes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries typical of the area.¹⁰⁸ Those aristocrats who did build on their estates did so increasingly in a particular way, adapting the popular Scottish Baronial and combining many of its architectural features with the prevalent dark local stone and a symmetrical plan on the neo-classical model. Like many of the architectural styles of the nineteenth century, the style of the homes of northern Ireland's elite during this period was a manifestation of both physical needs and symbolic conventions. This building type was embellished by characteristic 'Gothic' stylistic devices such as crow-stepped gables, towers, and defining string courses. Certain decorative features figure significantly, especially towers, which generally appear both at the ends and corners of these buildings and as entrance fronts. These towers are used with frequency as tools to add picturesque asymmetrical form to the neo-Classical floor plans of these homes, which according to Girouard owed their popularity not only to symbolic connotations, but also to an ability to comfortably incorporate the realities of the modern home within the romantic ideal of the medieval castle.¹⁰⁹

The adaptation in the north of Ireland of this form of altered Gothic was due to a number of influences, many of which show the distinct historical awareness of both the architects working in this style in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and of their aristocratic patrons. The legacy of the Ulster Plantation and the ties between the region and an historic idea of Scotland is the most apparent influence in the building style that characterises many of the homes built in the north of Ireland during the nineteenth century. The style of this time is at heart an offshoot of Scott's Scottish Baronial as pioneered at Abbotsford, although depending on location and patron, the style variously incorporates aspects of a number of other altered Gothic styles, including Jacobean Revival, Venetian Gothic as pioneered by John Ruskin, and certain forms primarily associated with William Morris' Arts and Crafts movement.¹¹⁰ In general, Irish architects flourished during this time, and those in the north of Ireland were working within a long-standing tradition that may have created a distinctive architectural type. Alistair Rowan has remarked on the 'remarkable

¹⁰⁸ PRONI, Belmore Papers, D/3007/Z

¹⁰⁹ Girouard, *The Return To Camelot*, p.162

¹¹⁰ Barrett & Sheehy, 'Visual Arts, 1850-1900' in Vaughan, *A New History of Ireland*, p.463; Rowan, *Buildings of Ireland*, p.70

uniformity’¹¹¹ of the Ulster architectural scene, and though his examples mainly come from a more modest class of building than that of the great country houses of the Ulster aristocracy, similarities can be clearly identified here. The prevalence of natural, local building materials in the north of Ireland is one aspect of the locality that both contributed to the ease of construction, and also helped cultivate something of a regional architectural idiom.¹¹²

The comparison of homes like Crom Castle, Castle Leslie, or Castlewellan with contemporary Irish neo-Gothic landed homes demonstrates how much the Gothic styles in northern Ireland during the nineteenth century owed to a Scottish template: Humewood Castle, built in the 1870s for William Hume Dick, a landowner from County Wicklow, or Adare Manor, seat of the earl of Dunraven, as well as those elsewhere in the island, show some differences in style and form when compared with elite homes in the north of Ireland.¹¹³ The intricate verticality that defined Irish neo-Gothic during this period was replaced in the north of Ireland with a greater simplicity of line and emphasis on the horizontal, especially in the use of string courses. The characteristically Scottish-inspired crow-stepped gables, which unite these homes, from the grandeur of Rossmore Park to the austerity of Castle Leslie, are missing from the homes of the south, replaced instead by a more Jacobethan intricacy of window surrounds and crenellations.

Medieval and early-modern inspiration was widespread during the late nineteenth century, and shared throughout Ireland: nowhere more so than among the aristocratic classes, who perceived in their medieval forebears an example of the aristocratic ethos of privilege and responsibility perfectly realised. This was particularly well expressed in some of the most popular literature of the day, and the influence of poets like Alfred Tennyson (who included the 1st marquess of Dufferin’s name in his preface of his *Idylls of the King*) was lasting in terms of articulating the longing felt by the upper classes for the stability and chivalry of a bygone age.¹¹⁴ Even more influential was Sir Walter Scott, the undisputed favourite of the landed classes, who not only integrated a romanticised Medievalism into the daily lives of the elite, but who also pioneered the romantic style of Scottish Baronial at his own home at Abbotsford, developing the architectural language which would become the primary

¹¹¹ Alistair Rowan, *The Buildings of Ireland: North-West Ulster* (Middlesex, 1979), p.75

¹¹² Rowan, *The Buildings of Ireland*, p.74

¹¹³ O’Reilly, *Irish Houses & Gardens*, pp.151-3, 162

¹¹⁴ Girouard, *The Return To Camelot*, p.227

influence on the Ulster style of the late nineteenth century.¹¹⁵ What the upper classes took from Scott during the nineteenth century cannot be over-estimated in the terms of establishing patterns of chivalry and developing a romanticised view of British history. ‘I love Sir Walter Scott,’ wrote Lord Dufferin, ‘with all my heart; and, my mother excepted, I think he has done more to form my character than any other influence; for he is the soul of purity, chivalry, respect for women and healthy religious feeling.’¹¹⁶ The form of influence Scott eventually had on the aristocracy was wholly unintentional, and it seems that some of his critiques of traditional ‘chivalric’ values went over the heads of his mid- and late-nineteenth century aristocratic admirers. However, the aristocratic perception of the linguistic and behavioural patterns established in his novels and poetry had a lasting power, especially in developing an ideal of the chivalrous modern gentleman. These patterns had their effect on a variety of aspects of aristocratic life, including architecture.

Other idealised visions also coloured the nineteenth-century elite view of revivalist architecture. Scott’s novels and poetry not only immortalised the Middle Ages for his readers, but this literature was one of many factors that also contributed to an idealised vision of Scotland. Mark Girouard has seen this as an offshoot of the Gothic Revival: in his view, clans and Highland chieftains were the nearest modern equivalent to the chivalry of the middle ages, especially as depicted in the works of authors like Scott.¹¹⁷ The aristocracy of Ulster were not the only ones to be affected by this growing passion for Scott’s interpretation of Highland culture (Queen Victoria became an enthusiastic and oft-mentioned visitor to Scotland), but they can be seen to have embraced a romanticised version of Highland life with great enthusiasm, integrating a Scott-developed version of Victorian ‘Balmorality’ into their reading material, dress, ancestral mythology, and especially into their architecture. This was certainly true at Clandeboye, as Nicolson particularly emphasised the influence of Scottish architecture on his uncle’s plans,¹¹⁸ and at Rossmore Park, where in the mid-1870s Lady Rossmore commissioned new domestic buildings as based on her interpretation of

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, p.30

¹¹⁶ Nicolson, *Helen’s Tower*, p.41

¹¹⁷ Girouard, *The Return To Camelot*, p.28. This is especially true in Scott’s 1813 novel, *Waverley*.

¹¹⁸ Nicolson, *Helen’s Tower*, pp.96,86

Lochranza Castle, a fourteenth century ruin on the Isle of Arran. Lady Rossmore forwarded a sketch of the Castle to William Hague in Dublin, with instructions to pay attention in particular to the rustic stonework in evidence on the walls of the ruin.¹¹⁹

During the second half of the nineteenth century, within the province of Ulster there existed not only continuity of style, but also of architects and designers. While the number of aristocratic rebuilds commissioned during the later nineteenth and early twentieth century is limited, within the sample of reconstructions on offer, we can see the repetition of the same figures again and again. This aristocratic adherence to a certain set of architects is not new in the late nineteenth century: an architectural community in the north of Ireland began in the Golden Age of Ascendancy building and was first expressed in the neo-Classical tradition that dominated architecture in Ireland and across Britain throughout the eighteenth century.¹²⁰ The choice of a well-known and respected artist, architect, or sculptor had long been part of the aristocracy's way of displaying their financial and cultural power in a form that was clearly recognisable to their peers. This tendency seems to have been heightened in the nineteenth century, however, and especially from the 1830s onwards the same names are repeated in architecture in the area.

The creation of an architectural community was yet another means by which the aristocracy in the north of Ireland solidified their ties within their society, both encouraging the formation of relationships with craftsmen and builders in the area, and in expressing their locality's architecture in a clear local vernacular. In particular, we can see the involvement of two architectural firms in the cultural world of these elite families in the late nineteenth century, that of William Hague, who was based out of Dublin and also held an office in Cavan, and of the two partners in the Belfast firm of Lynn and Lanyon. The repeated use of these two firms of architects, and the sole use of them on the most substantial rebuilds of this period, demonstrates the shared architectural tastes of the landed classes in Ulster, and their desire to be tied to a certain type of built environment in the years after 1870.

¹¹⁹ PRONI, Rossmore Papers, T/2929/14/2. Letter dated 19 August 1876 from William Hague, 44 Westland Row, Dublin, to Lady Rossmore

¹²⁰ Jackson-Stops, 'Baronscourt, I', p.163

As an architect, Hague is generally associated with mid-century Catholic Church building in Ulster, which he primarily executed in a late-Gothic style dependent on sculptural detail and rich materials such as pine and marble. But Hague's work was never exclusively Catholic, and he was a regular, if not frequent, choice among the Ulster aristocracy.¹²¹ In 1871 Hague was involved in the rebuild of Hilton Park, county Monaghan, the ancestral home of the Madden family, in the neo-classical style. By the end of the 1870s, however, his style seems to have developed, and he increasingly became associated with the Gothic Revival style used on his ecclesiastical commissions. This coloured his designs at Crom Castle (1873, 1877 onwards) and at Rossmore Park in 1876. Shortly after the completion of the project at Hilton Park Hague began the redesign of the servant's (North) wing at Crom, which involved the alteration of a one-storey wing of the existing Castle (built in the 1830s) into a two-storey building. Working within the style of Crom, which had been designed by Edward Blore, Hague inserted the second floor into the building, removing and then replacing the decorative features from the original roofline on the new structure to guarantee the continuity of the structure, as well as integrating modern advances such as skylights within the roof of the second storey. In this, one of his earliest domestic commissions in the Gothic style, Hague was able to demonstrate his ability to use the style not only on the church architecture that had previously dominated his career, but to integrate Gothic forms into the fabric of existing domestic buildings seamlessly. The success of this project was no doubt the basis for future commissions, as he returned to Crom Castle later in the 1870s, after working on a similar project at Rossmore Park in 1876. The work at Rossmore Park, as has been discussed, was largely under the direction of Lady Rossmore, who had a clear idea of the stylistic influences she wanted incorporated into the creation of the house's new service wing. The rusticated stonework, the use of Gothic window types, and the inclusion of battlemented rooflines were all no doubt intended to sympathise with the existing neo-Gothic structures of the Rossmore home, as well as expressing her Ladyship's interest in the tower houses of Scotland's West Coast. This was to encourage the patronage of other peers from the province: the next year Hague returned to Crom to complete alterations on the east and south-east wings, as well as to direct the redecoration of the principal Castle interiors. Later in the nineteenth century he returned to domestic architecture, completing renovations on Moynehall House, Cavan for the Fay family.

¹²¹ Rowan, *Buildings of Ireland*, p.68

Around the same time, the architects Charles Lanyon and W.H. Lynn were also making a mark on Ulster's architectural world. The firm of Lanyon, Lynn, and Lanyon was based in Belfast between 1860 and 1872, completing work in these years at Hillsborough Castle, Belfast Castle, and, in 1863, designing the Ulster Club, which would come to play an increasingly important part in the lives of the peers of the north of Ireland as the nineteenth century became the twentieth. When W.H. Lynn joined the Belfast firm of Charles Lanyon in 1854 (the firm was extended to include Charles Lanyon, Jr., in 1860) he may have taken over many of the design-related aspects of the firm, leaving Lanyon to further develop the business and financial sides of his company. Before the dissolution of the firm in 1872, both Lynn and Lanyon also began working on solo projects, including Lanyon's unexecuted 1870 design for Hilton Park, a project which was later given to William Hague. Lynn's work is increasingly associated in the 1850s through 1870s with the development of an eclectic style based on the concepts of Ruskinian Gothic-Revival.¹²² In the late 1860s he pioneered the Hiberno-Romanesque style, which infused architecture and the decorative arts with a myriad of ancient Irish motifs. The new style partly influenced some of his work at Belfast Castle (1868-70),¹²³ as well as at the near-contemporaneous Castle Leslie (1872-9), though both structures lean more toward the austerity of the popular Scottish Baronial, as inspired by Glamis Castle and influential throughout Ulster in estate architecture during this time, than the more florid styles of the later Hiberno-Romanesque.

The style of Castle Leslie, characteristic of architecture in the north of Ireland at the time, is reflective of the aesthetic preferences of both Sir John Leslie and Lynn. Like much of the neo-Gothic architecture of its time, Castle Leslie combines elements of a variety of styles, ultimately fusing the early Renaissance style about which Sir John was passionate with the Lombardic and Hiberno-Romanesque traditions developed by Lynn and the popular Scottish Baronial style. Sir John's passion for early Renaissance style may have been in part what encouraged him to employ Lynn, who originated the use of the northern Italian-inspired 'Lombardic style' in his domestic commissions.¹²⁴ When the Marquess of Dufferin hoped to rebuild his house at Clandeboye, he also chose Lynn as his architect, reflecting a long relationship fostered through shared patronage of the arts in Belfast, as well as a number of

¹²² Barrett & Sheehy, 'Visual Arts, 1850-1900', p.465; Rowan, *Buildings of Ireland*, p.63

¹²³ Barrett & Sheehy, 'Visual Arts, 1850-1900', p.469

¹²⁴ *ibid.*, p.463

architectural commissions. In the 1850s, Lynn and Lanyon were involved in a project at Killyleagh Castle, the home of his future bride and distant kinswoman, Hariot Rowan-Hamilton, adding a distinctive and romantic turreted silhouette to the house to better match the owner's conception of their romantic (partly) medieval Castle.¹²⁵ Unexecuted plans for seaside villas at Helen's Bay in 1870 and refurbishment of Quebec's Chateau St. Louis in 1876 grew into projects that were realised, including the restoration of some of the city walls in Quebec in 1875, although this project did not go as far as either the marquess or Lynn would have liked. During Dufferin's career as Governor-General of Canada, he had hatched a plan to rebuild the city of Quebec as a modern day Camelot, but there was limited enthusiasm or funding for the plan beyond its creators.¹²⁶

Like his enthusiastic creations in Quebec, Dufferin commissioned more designs for Clondeboy from Lynn than were ever completed, although alterations were made to the house throughout the 1880s. The marquess' hopes of using Lynn's designs to recreate Clondeboy as a neo-Gothic castle were constrained by his increasingly limited financial means, but his intentions, and his use of Lynn to endeavour to realise these dreams, are indicative of the culture in which the aristocracy of Ulster was operating during this period. Dufferin was unusual in wanting to completely rebuild his house, but like many peers, he was trying to create within the built environment of his estate a reflection of his own image of the aristocratic patron. Like Sir John Leslie, he made efforts to create this within the context of the unionist history that was increasingly being promoted for Ulster's landowning families. The conflict between a romantic, idealistic conception of the traditional role of the landowner and the reality of the aristocratic world in the late nineteenth century was a fundamental issue for men like Dufferin and Leslie. Their perception of their role as expressed in their dreams for their family homes seems to have been repeatedly defeated by their social, political, and financial situations, and this conflict was one that was faced by almost all aristocrats during this period to various extents.

According to Jeremy Williams, when Sir John Leslie returned from a lengthy stay in Italy (collecting the vast array of Italian Renaissance and Renaissance-revival furnishings which would dominate the home) to the rebuilt Castle Leslie, he 'exclaimed that it was not

¹²⁵ Girouard, *The Return To Camelot*, p.78

¹²⁶ *ibid.*, p.227

what he meant at all.¹²⁷ Williams imprecisely attributes Sir John's disappointment in his new home not to some architectural failure, but to the psychological dichotomy faced by John Leslie as both pre-Raphaelite *artiste* and as the new proprietor of the estate at Glaslough. Though the beauty of the lakefront situation and the estate at Glaslough combined with the architectural eccentricities of both Lynn and Leslie worked in many ways to redress the stiffness of some of the Castle's exteriors, Castle Leslie has been characterised as dour in design.¹²⁸ It may not have fulfilled Sir John's initial expectations, no less because the original plans for the reconstructed Castle seem to point toward a grander scheme, possibly inspired by the sixteenth-century royal chateau at Chambord.¹²⁹

Similarly, Harold Nicolson described the unexecuted design for Clandeboye as a combination between 'the simplicity of Balmoral with the elegance of Chambord or of Blois'.¹³⁰ Lynn's use of Chambord as inspiration at Clandeboye as well as at Castle Leslie contributes to the inspirational continuity within late-nineteenth century architecture in Ulster. Chambord was to appear with increasing frequency as an inspiration in the architectural styles of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, especially within the Eclectic movement of the late nineteenth century.¹³¹ The use of the building within this context is suggestive: the chateau is recognisable as a prime example of a mix of high-Medieval detailing with the structures of the Italian Renaissance,¹³² and when juxtaposed with the influences and popularity of Scottish Baronial architecture in Ulster and the rest of the United Kingdom, is suggestive of the wide range of historicised styles which influenced these families in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Just as Hague achieved at Crom Castle the mixture of a Baronial exterior with Italian interiors, the style achieved the best of both worlds: romantic Medieval whimsy with powerful Renaissance function. The

¹²⁷ Castle Leslie as it actually was constructed has been characterised in a number of different ways, from 'part dream-chateau, part Belfast-city bank' to eclectic Tudor-Italian Renaissance) but what predominates in the interior and exterior of the house is Sir John Leslie's enthusiasm for Italian-inspired aesthetics. (Barrett & Sheehy, 'Visual Arts, 1850-1900', p.468; Leslie, *The Gilt and the Gingerbread*, p.14; Williams, *Architecture in Ireland*, p.317)

¹²⁸ Bence-Jones, *Irish Country Houses*, p.71

¹²⁹ Williams, *Architecture in Ireland*, p.317

¹³⁰ Nicolson, *Helen's Tower*, pp.96,86

¹³¹ Pile, *A History of Interior Design*, p.308

¹³² The chateau is also well-known as a possible fruit of the mind of Leonardo da Vinci, who was a guest of Francois I shortly before the building's conception, although this connection, rather than that to French architect Philbert Delorme or the Italian Domenico da Cortona has been widely disputed. Ludwig H. Heydenreich, "Leonardo da Vinci, Architect of Francis I", *The Burlington Magazine* (October 1952), pp. 277-285

muse that stimulated the aesthetics on these homes points to a highly romanticised, possibly idealistic, conception of the country home. The creation of a Scottish-Baronial chateau was obviously intended to better suit Dufferin's idealistic concept of himself and of the Clondeboyne landscape than the neo-classical house he originally inherited.

The difficulties of the social situation of the Irish elite in the 1870s may have been reflected in Sir John Leslie's dissatisfaction at the first viewing of his new home, as they were in the marquess of Dufferin's inability to make his finances answer to his architectural preferences. The creation of a new, historically-based home did not, in fact, make Sir John's unexpected inheritance, newly-minted title, or the economic stresses of landowning during a period of depressed agricultural prices and increasing agrarian tensions, sit any easier. From 1870 the United Kingdom seemed to deny the need for patriarchal guidance from traditional leaders, and those leaders struggled to find a role that suited their ancestral conception of their responsibilities within this increasingly independent society. This divide between past ideal and present and future reality is at the heart of aristocratic building in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and offers a partial explanation as to why massive reconstruction as seen at Castle Leslie was rare. Historicism was often used, although in this case somewhat ineffectually, by the elite of Ulster during this period to assist in reintegrating the elite into the fabric and leadership of daily society. Architectural idealism and vision existed within aristocratic society, but it was rendered increasingly socially anachronistic and financially impossible in the face of the changes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The aristocracy of Ulster was architecturally active during the period between 1870 and 1925, using the decoration, renovation, and adaptation of their principal country homes as means to declare and reserve their role at the centre of British and Irish society, and to retain the position of their homes as the locations of landed society. Much of the building work commissioned during the period between 1870 and 1925 was intended to sustain, rather than reconstruct, and this period saw a substantial effort to integrate changes in domestic mores and technology into the aristocratic home without interrupting the architectural vernacular that was already in existence. The economic uncertainty of the time may have affected both the ability and desire of the landed classes to reinvest in their estates in architectural terms, but this did not cause what has previously been characterised by historians as an architectural retrenchment. Alternatively, the pre-existence of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century

grand family homes that reflected the historicised ideals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century aristocrat on these estates had a much greater effect on their desires to commission large rebuilds, thereby limiting much elite patronage at this time to renovation.

This chapter has outlined the building projects that were undertaken on seven of the primary estates of the twelve aristocratic families under examination in this study. From the full reconstruction of Castle Leslie in the 1870s, through the creation of a new type of service area in homes like Rossmore Park, Crom Castle, and Clandeboy House in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, to the substantial decorative and structural alterations made at homes like Mountstewart and Mourne Park in the early years of the twentieth century, these changes were reflective of changes in technology, society, and aesthetics in Britain and Ireland during this time. The willingness of the aristocracy to alter their homes accordingly demonstrates their larger cultural adaptability in these years. The previous neglect of this important aspect of aristocratic culture in the north of Ireland has obscured the role the landed classes played in Irish culture at the time, and the active choices they made to preserve their relevance within the nation at large.

Extensive construction or rebuilding in Ulster during this period primarily developed along fairly clear regional lines: forms of ‘altered Gothic’ inspired by the distinctive history of Ulster and the region’s ties with Scotland were favoured on the larger rebuilds, where the same architects (particularly W.H. Lynn and William Hague) often wielded influence, creating an active architectural community in Ulster and beyond, of which these aristocratic families formed a part. The dependency of these families on the historical references in architecture in the nineteenth century have rendered an altered form of the Scottish Baronial ubiquitous among these country houses, but the style was more than simply popular: it referenced the close ties between Ulster and Scotland, including the Scottish descent of many of the area’s premiere families, evidence of the interest of the landed classes in promoting themselves as the historical leaders of the nation, and creating this tradition even where it did not already exist. At the same time, the use of Scottish Baronial and Gothic Revival styles demonstrated an awareness of the region’s architectural template, one that was in great part formed under the direction of the Scottish Undertakers of the seventeenth century in the architectural language of crow-stepped gables, strong string courses, peaked roofs, and dark

local stone. The conscious decision of the aristocracy to tie their architectural commissions to concepts of history and authenticity during a time of financial and political uncertainty is one that is representative of many contemporaneous cultural decisions of this group of the elite more generally. Consciousness of lineage and ancestral expectation were the cornerstones of aristocratic ideology, and they were eager to display their understanding of these concepts in forceful visual terminology.



Entrance Hall at Clandeboy House, County Down, c. 1900. Photograph courtesy of Ulster Architectural Heritage Society



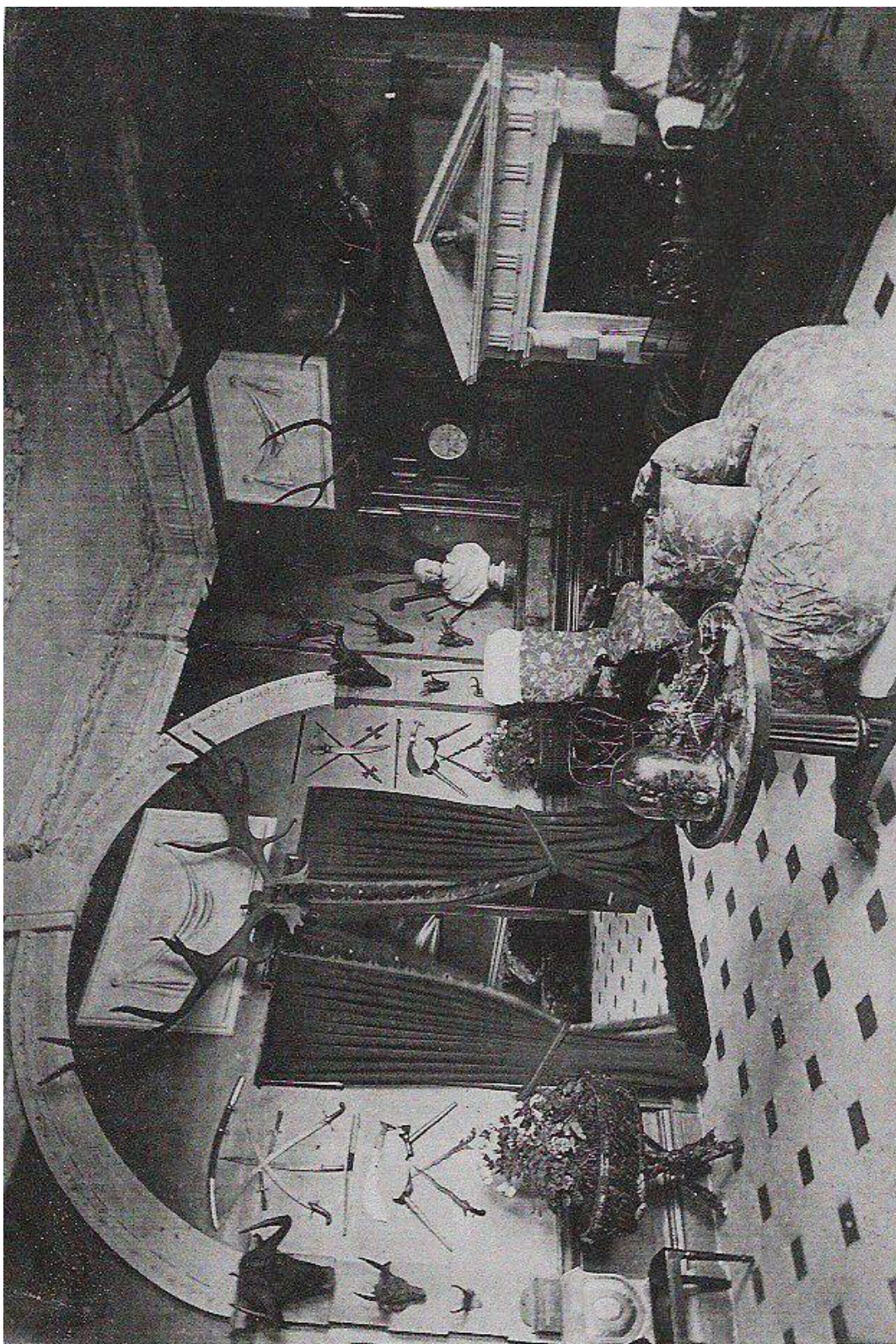
View of Crom Castle, County Fermanagh, with boathouse



Castle Leslie, County Monaghan



Caledon, County Tyrone. From Francis Orpen Morris, *A series of picturesque views of seats of the noblemen and gentlemen of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1880)



An example of Baronial themes within a neo-Classical setting: the sitting room at Florence Court, County Fermanagh, 1880s. PRONI, Enniskillen Papers, D/1702/11/3



Rossmore Park, County Monaghan.

From Francis Orpen Morris, *A series of picturesque views of seats of the noblemen and gentlemen of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1880)



Castlewellan, County Down



The drawing room at Castlewellan, featuring Morris wallpaper and Chinese silk curtains, c. 1888. PRONI, Annesley Papers, T/3774/4/1



Adare Manor, County Limerick

From Francis Orpen Morris, *A series of picturesque views of seats of the noblemen and gentlemen of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1880)



Abbotsford House, Scottish Borders

Engraved by E. Finden after a picture by W. Westall. From Thomas Moule, *Great Britain Illustrated* (London, 1830)

FIVE

SYMBOLS OF POWER: ARISTOCRATIC SPORT ON THE ULSTER ESTATE

The aristocracy and landed classes were the United Kingdom's leisured class, and as such, the form of their leisure was both affected by, and in turn influenced, their involvement in the economic and political life of the nation. The challenges to their economic and political power that arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also affected their carefully structured social world, which was functional as much as it was indulgent, and in David Cannadine's words, 'an essential adjunct to their landed holdings and political duties.'¹ Kim Reynolds has seen leisure as the definitive power within aristocratic life, observing that 'in whatever fashion an aristocrat spent his time, that occupation did not constitute work.'² The changing composition of the political and agricultural worlds during the late nineteenth century had a particular effect on the estate-based leisure of the aristocracy in the north of Ireland, who were active in the social life of both Ireland and Britain. Scholars are in agreement that it was within the countryside that the landed classes retained the bulk of their powers, influencing leisure, society, and daily life in the countryside after much of their authority in politics and within the metropolitan world of business had waned.³ F.S.L. Lyons has identified this period, particularly the first decade of the twentieth century, as a

strange *chiaroscuro*. The shadow of ultimate expropriation indeed hung over them, but it could be relegated to the border of consciousness because upon "real life"—fox hunting, shooting, fishing, lawn-tennis, house-parties, the Vice-regal

¹ David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (London, 1992), p.341

² Kim Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain* (Oxford 1998), p.20

³ Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England, 1918-1951* (Oxford, 1998), p.35; Margaret Maynard, "'A Dream of Fair Women': Revival Dress and the Formation of Late Victorian Images of Femininity", in Peter McNeil (ed.), *Fashion: Critical and Primary Sources, Volume 3: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 2009), p.383

season—the sun continued to shine as if nothing had changed or was ever likely to change.⁴

Lyons has perceived this view of the situation as characteristic of the Anglo-Irish, who demonstrated what he saw as a ‘tendency to go on living in the past,’ standing their ground in the face of the threat, rather than reconstituting their way of life to suit the changing world around them.⁵ However, the aristocracy of Ulster cannot be defined as ‘backward-looking’ in their social and cultural pursuits during this period. More appropriately, these families must be categorized as adaptive, making conscious changes to their patterns of rural leisure in to keep pace with the changing climate, while at the same time looking for a chance to revive and preserve their past glories, where they could.

Lyons may additionally be only partly correct in assigning to the Anglo-Irish as a whole the sort of retrospective attitude that helped them to continue living in the past. The families included within this study certainly cannot be defined in this way, and due to forces of geography, economics, and status, are additionally not necessarily representative of the landed classes in Ireland as a whole. As with their cultural output in other areas, in the use of their estates the aristocracy of Ulster demonstrated some of the adaptability that characterised their interactions with society during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This has been discussed in Chapter 1 in relation to their readiness to adapt their patterns of ownership and to take advantage of favourable terms offered by the Land Acts from the 1880s onward. This adaptability is also apparent in the ways they used their lands and the changes they instituted in rural leisure practises during the years between 1870 and 1925.

Alvin Jackson has suggested that landed society in Ulster may have appeared differently to the British visitor from that found elsewhere, whether in the rest of Ireland, or elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Certainly, this strangeness was apparent to a distinguished visitor to Castle Saunderson, who found social relations very relaxed, even remarking within his journal on ‘a scruffy old man, who looked like a gillie, and who was wool gathering by a jetty,’ and expressing his surprise that this old man was, in fact, the earl of Erne.⁶ The same atmosphere would have prevailed at the earl’s home, Crom Castle, which served as the centre of loughside Society in the late nineteenth century, although other guests did not necessarily

⁴ F.S.L. Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland, 1890-1939* (Oxford, 1979), p.72

⁵ *ibid.*, p.72

⁶ Alvin Jackson, *Colonel Edward Saunderson: Land and Loyalty in Victorian Ireland* (Oxford, 1995), p.190; Churchill College, Cambridge, Bull Papers, 3/12. Extract from diary, September 1905

remark on it. This social world was given an individuality, however, through the leisure pursuits around which these estates were centred. Where rural landed society in the rest of Ireland, and to some extent in the southern counties of England, was centred on the dining and entertainment associated with fox-hunting, in many areas culminating in the annual Hunt Ball, the lack of a culture of fox hunting within Ulster until the Second World War forced society to function differently in the area.⁷ Hunting society was substituted in much of the aristocratic Ulster with yachting society, which replaced the crucial sociability of the hunt table with the intimate, water-side pursuits centred on the great houses on the shores of Lough Erne and the Down coasts.

This chapter will examine some of the patterns of leisure on the Ulster estate during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, primarily focusing on sport as the most consuming and well-documented of elite countryside pursuits. The sporting patterns in the north of Ireland in this period suggest some regional trends among the province's elite pursuits, pastimes that may have been reflective of a wider local colour within the society of the nine counties of Ulster. During this period, the north of Ireland's elite continued to engage with patterns of leisure that had defined their families for generations, but within this traditional landed existence, they subtly altered their interactions with their estates in order to best support their social existences during a time of threat. Exploring the leisure practices of the elite is essential to understanding their way of life, which has previously been ignored in the economic histories of these estates: this is where much of the money created and lost through land purchase was destined, as well as one of their primary means of interacting with their estates. Leisure therefore plays an important, and previously missing, part in the analysis of the history of the aristocracy of the north of Ireland. While focusing on the estate, this chapter is not intended to be an examination of the culture of land dispersal during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, nor an examination of those agrarian tensions that changed rural life from the 1880s: these forces that been examined at length in the work of scholars such as W.E. Vaughan, Alvin Jackson, and Olwen Purdue. Instead, the intention of this chapter is to begin to explore new avenues in the history of the aristocracy of Ireland, looking at the ways the sporting practises of Ulster's elite were used as tools to help preserve

⁷ Dorothea Conyers, *Sporting Reminiscences* (London, 1920); Raymond Carr, *English Fox Hunting: A History* (London, 1976), p.135

the social relevance of the aristocracy in the face of the widely-studied political and economic challenges of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The examination of these important leisure practises is significant in the study of Ulster's elite, both in terms of the enormous amounts of time and money that were invested in sporting activities, and in their role as the ends toward which the estate management practises of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were the means. These peers were willing to go to enormous lengths in order to preserve these traditional pursuits, partly because their patterns of leisure and entertainment were the defining factors of aristocratic life, and because as the nineteenth century became the twentieth, they were finding themselves increasingly able to adapt these practises, using them as tools with which to support and extend the social and cultural relevance of the Ulster aristocracy. As with other changes seen in the social, cultural, and political world of the aristocracy, the peers of Ulster at the same time tried to embrace aspects of the changing world of the twentieth century and to marry them to the traditional way of life associated with their class and its estates. This is evidenced clearly in their patterns of leisure, sport, and entertainment.

The elite country homes of the north of Ireland played an important role as social hubs in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and it was crucial that these families attracted the powerful to their homes in order to make the informal connections that traditionally made kinship, politics, economics work for the aristocracy. It was the changes in these connections and in the society that filled their homes which helped to secure the place of Ulster's aristocrats among the glamorous and socially relevant upper classes in the early twentieth century. The analysis within this chapter will begin by introducing entertainment on the estates of the aristocracy of Ulster, around which much of the sporting schedule of the landed classes was based. House parties, which were the central events of elite society in the country, were important functions for helping to bolster the sense of landed community, and within these parties, guests were further brought together through the shared practises of sport and enthusiasm for country pursuits.

Most importantly, however, Ulster's aristocracy used the specific offerings of their localities to draw friends and acquaintances to their Ulster estates. Yachting and sailing may have been embraced during the nineteenth century by these families as a means to promote social and sporting culture that in many ways compensated for the failures of Ulster as an equestrian society. Sailing was especially popular on Lough Erne, in southern Ulster, which

commanded a central role in the extensive, exclusive lakeside society of families like the Ernes and Enniskillens.⁸ The role of boating in forging a more tightly knit community among these families, and in connecting the landed classes of Ulster to other marine enthusiasts from across Europe, was an important one. Additionally, as an expensive, time-consuming, and extremely elitist activity, yachting and sailing as aristocratic activities illustrate some of the most important principles that drove the pursuit of sport during this period. In their adaptation of this alternate sporting arena, the landed classes of the north of Ireland created a sphere in which they and their estates were central to the pursuits of the elite in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, responding positively to the political and social challenges which they faced during this period. While the leisure of the landed classes in the rest of Ireland was characterised by the society of the hunt, as frequently portrayed in contemporary literature, aristocratic society in the north of Ireland had an alternate focus, one that both set the leisure patterns of the province's elite apart from their fellows in the rest of Ireland, and tied them more closely to a British and international coterie of yachting enthusiasts. In this, the development of yachting as the premier social pursuit of the Ulster magnate is indicative of the intentions of these families within their culture more generally: their leisure, like their family life, was directed by ideas of cultural unionism.

These families also engaged with those sports which have been more traditionally associated with the landed classes of Ireland, including hunting, both with guns and with hounds, and equestrian sports. Shooting was practiced invariably in some form on the estates under examination in this study, and other blood sports also occupied the families and guests on great estates in the north of Ireland. This chapter will examine the pursuit and the meaning of game on the estates of these families, and look at the implications of late nineteenth and twentieth century social changes for the continuance of this sport on estates in the north of Ireland. However, not all forms of hunting were suited to these estates, and while many aristocrats participated in fox hunting, which has come to stand as a symbol of the culture of Ireland's landed classes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the hunting of foxes, rather than stag or hare, was extremely rare within in the north of Ireland until after the Second World War.⁹ Instead, a culture of hare coursing developed in Ulster during this

⁸ Jackson, *Colonel Edward Saunderson*, p.189

⁹ Claude Costecalde and Jack Gallagher, *Hunting in Ireland: A Noble Tradition* (Ireland, 2004), p.28

period, and, in contrast to the divisive nature of fox-hunting in Ireland, acted as sport which united the aristocratic patrons of the sport with the rural working classes.

Unlike fox-hunting, hare coursing (and the associated hunting of hares on horseback with sighthounds, which was also practised across Ulster) did not become one of the defining pastimes of these families. In part, the sport lacked the symbolism of fox-hunting, no less because the coursing was not always pursued on horseback. Chief among the pursuits of the British and Irish country house were sports involving the horse, that lasting symbol of aristocratic supremacy. As will be discussed within this chapter, however, the horse had a different place within the lives of Ulster's elite: as a source of labour and pleasure, horses played an important part on these estates, but despite the efforts of some of Ulster's aristocratic families, the region failed as a centre of breeding or racing programmes. Both fox-hunting and horse-racing were consuming interests of these families, but they were almost invariably practiced away from their estates, either on their other properties, or during visits to friends. The contrast between the central role played by these peers within the yachting scene both at home and abroad, and the secondary or spectator role to which they were reduced in their equestrian pursuits, is clearly indicative of the sporting culture of Ulster during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and demonstrates the ways in which these families saw both success and failure in adapting their patterns of leisure to the changes of this period.

For the aristocracy of Ulster, their country homes were the primary location of their leisure time, much of which was dominated by the requirements of Society entertaining. The most socially exalted families in Ulster regularly entertained high profile guests at their homes in Ulster, and relished the political and social implications of their status. The combined interests of politics, society, and leisure met at the elite country home, and offered the landed classes—both local residents and visitors—a meeting place that surpassed both the London drawing room or gentleman's club for importance within elite life, and serving as a location for family celebrations, political meetings, and charity events.¹⁰ The ability of any family to draw visitors to their home was crucial: without these visitors, the role of the Ulster country house as an elite social hub would be reduced to a local meeting ground, thereby diminishing the status and the social connections of the family. The comfort of the home, the

¹⁰ *Belfast News-Letter*, 29 October 1894; *The Morning Post*, 2 June 1890; PRONI, Rossmore Papers, T/2929/13/102. From *The Lady Pictorial*, 21 December 1895

beauty of the surroundings, the sparkling society of the house party, and the leisure opportunities on offer within the locality all played a part in encouraging friends and acquaintances to travel to, and to stay at, the homes of Ulster's aristocracy.

The primary leisure occupation of the landed classes was sport, and as such house parties held at estates were dominated by the outdoor agenda. Men like Lord Ernest Hamilton emphasised the importance of the outdoor agenda in the form of hunting within aristocratic society. 'A man who did not hunt, in one form or another,' he wrote, 'was looked at sideways. He was not quite "one of us".'¹¹ For the aristocracy, most of the sporting activities traditionally associated with the landed classes—hunting, shooting, riding, lawn sports—were those based on and around the estate. The emphasis within the elite house party on sporting events was reflective of the preoccupation of the landed classes with countryside sports, and the popularity of these activities was supported into the twentieth century by their usefulness as symbols to be harnessed to support the continued relevance of the aristocracy within elite Ulster society.

Importantly, the aristocracy needed to have a reason for their guests to come to their estates: without an ambitious sporting schedule, especially in the face of the diminishing political relevance and fortunes of the elite, and social upheaval in Ireland, travel to Ulster held a waning attraction for the British and European elite. Though house parties were structured primarily around sport, the occasion often additionally carried political overtones, especially when friendship and political power intersected, and royal, familial, political, and financial interests often intersected at these events.¹² While the politics of the Ulster aristocracy are not within the scope of this work, to examine the social world of the aristocracy with no mention of the political implications of entertaining would be as remiss as to examine the political world of these peers without reference to the important place Society played within national and local politics. There was both a social and a political element to almost all aspects of elite life.

¹¹ Lord Ernest Hamilton, *The Halcyon Era: A Rambling Reverie of Now and Then* (London, 1933), p.18

¹² PRONI, Theresa Londonderry Papers, D/2846/3/24/1. Collection of Family clippings, cuttings, engraving, etc. relating to the Londonderry family in general, c. 1771-1903; PRONI, Rossmore Papers, T/2929/13/107, 18 April 1896; PRONI, Rossmore Papers, T/2929/13/102. From *The Lady Pictorial*, 21 December 1895

Just as politics contributed to the value of the entertainment schedule of the elite, the economic requirements of the sports most frequently engaged in by Ulster's aristocracy helped make them the preserve of the wealthy.¹³ As Ross McKibbin has recognised, the exclusivity of the sports most associated with the landed class was due to primarily to cost or convention, rather than any active intervention of the participants.¹⁴ Because of this, these activities could be used by the elite to solidify connections within their social circles and to gradually assimilate new wealth and privilege within a controlled environment. Shooting, yachting, horse-racing, and sailing were inherently expensive hobbies. Many of the pursuits most associated with the aristocracy in the nineteenth century were costly ones, both in terms of actual financial requirements, as well as in terms of the time-investment required to achieve proficiency. These hobbies were selected both because of their value as pastimes and for their exclusive nature, especially as social changes threatened the traditional patterns of aristocratic life.

As Society expanded and the formerly exclusive political and economic powers of the landed classes became less secure, the aristocracy sought new ways of forming elite communities. Pursuing sports that by their very nature declared their participants as wealthy and leisured helped to re-establish the elitism of landed life within this realm, preserving an exclusive, elite culture in sport into the twentieth century. As elsewhere in Britain, the aristocracy in the north of Ireland retained into the twentieth century at least partial control of those sports that required either economic substance or the admittance to a certain social coterie for participation,¹⁵ and these symbols of their continued economic power, leisured existence, and social elitism remained the most important elements of elite society in the countryside. Yet within the northern province, there is also some evidence of a conscious development of a new culture of leisure from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, one that corresponds directly with the upheaval in the Irish countryside and the sweeping legislative and financial changes of Victorian landownership. This response to the challenges of the nineteenth century was manifested in the use of two forms of leisure on the elite estates of Ulster: in hunting, which within Ulster was the hunting of game, rather than foxes, as

¹³ Simon Nowell-Smith (ed.), *Edwardian England, 1901-1914* (London, 1964), p.453

¹⁴ McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, p.357

¹⁵ Nowell-Smith, *Edwardian England*, pp.451-453

prevalent elsewhere in Ireland, and more specifically, in yachting, which became the primary leisure occupation of many of these families from the 1870s onwards.

Guests at aristocratic gatherings relished the casual, outdoor way of life, an informality which served to improve group dynamics and, according to John Ynyr Burges, a guest at Crom Castle, their appetites, as well: “Everyone is fresh and is in spirits, the gents looking forward to their sport and the ladies to their conversation. We all eat immensely, for in such a breezy air one could not help feeling hungry... The gents, all in various sporting costumes of different colours, lose no time in starting for the covers.”¹⁶ The intentional centring of the social lives of these families on the lakes of south Ulster and on the coasts of County Down emphasised a form of leisure that their specific estates could offer, which many other estates could not. The development of a sporting schedule that was specific to the locality became one of the draws to these homes, helping the families who lived within them to retain their social relevance. Yachting and sailing, and to a more limited extent hunting (both with guns and as coursing with dogs) were embraced during this period as the pastimes which enhanced the specific pleasures of the estates of the north of Ireland.

An aspect of elite patterns of entertainment in the countryside was the inclusiveness of the house party: despite the inherent elitism of this social world, once offered entrée into the homes of Ulster’s elite, guests were integrated within the society on offer within, at least for the duration of their stay. An important part of this was the participation of guests within the sporting agenda, and guests were allowed, even expected, to participate in or spectate this central entertainment. The proliferation of female involvement in the sporting schedules of Ulster’s aristocracy questions any suggestions that this world was primarily the preserve of men. In a world of strict chaperonage, the hunt offered an opportunity for Victorian women, particularly younger, unmarried ones, to escape some of the societal pressures of the drawing room.¹⁷ More importantly, like male aristocrats, women from the landed classes saw sport as valuable symbolically and practically within the social world as a tool for integration, advancement, and the consolidation of landed interests. As ever, female aristocrats were

¹⁶ PRONI, T/1282/2 pp.158-166. Diary of John Ynyr Burges of Parkanaur, Castlecaulfield, Co. Tyrone, 25-27 November 1863

¹⁷ Raymond Carr, *English Fox Hunting: A History* (London, 1976), p.174; Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles: Society Etiquette and the Season* (London, 1973), p.29

members of their class first, and women second, and their interests and priorities reflected this.

Some more established women hunters resented the incursion of the younger women into the arena of sport, as Lord Rossmore related in his memoirs: 'In the old days when you and I hunted in the Shires,' an old friend told him, 'fewer women hunted, and when they went out, they went out for sport and to hunt the foxes. Nowadays they go out to jump on each other, and to hunt men.'¹⁸ Lord Rossmore's response to this comment was a measured one; while he recognised a change in the composition of the hunting world, he is likely to have encouraged it, as his wife and daughter were both praised in the press as excellent hunters.¹⁹ His niece, the Duchess of Newcastle, was another rider who was admired by the press: her 'equestrian accomplishments may be said to be hereditary, for her father, the popular Major Candy, is an excellent rider, as is also her mother, Lord Rossmore's sister.'²⁰ Similarly, the Ladies Cole, daughters of the 4th earl of Enniskillen, were admired in the press for their equestrian skills, while the enthusiasm of Lady Norah Hastings (later countess of Kilmorey) and Irene Miller-Mundy (later countess of Enniskillen) were counted by the press and by family members by as recommendations for the suitability of their marriages with peers from the north of Ireland.²¹ The 7th marquess and marchioness of Londonderry spent a great deal of time hunting, both in Ireland and in England, where early in their marriage they rented a cottage for the purpose of sport at Whissendine, Rutland.²² The elder marchioness of Londonderry and the duchess of Manchester were present when Lord Terence Blackwood (later 2nd marquess of Dufferin), his wife Lady Florence (née Davis), and his sister, Lady Hermione, were hunting in Scotland.²³

Women were also highly involved in the other sports that formed the core of estate life in Ulster, emphasising that while the sporting schedule may have been male-dominated to an

¹⁸ 5th Lord Rossmore (Derrick Westenra), *Things I Can Tell* (London, 1912), p.181

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p.202

²⁰ PRONI, Rossmore Papers, T/2929/13/104. From *Modern Society*, 18 January 1896

²¹ PRONI, Enniskillen Papers, D/1702/9/4. Scrapbook of newspaper cuttings, sketches and caricatures by Florence Cole, 1864-1903; Enniskillen Papers, D/1702/12/49/1-2. Letters written on the engagement of Lord Cole and Irene Miller-Mundy, 1906; Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/E/27-28. Two bound volumes of newscuttings announcing the engagement and the marriage of the 4th Earl of Kilmorey to Lady Norah Hastings, 1920

²² H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Londonderrys: A Family Portrait* (London, 1979), p.86

²³ PRONI, Dufferin Papers, D/1231/F/6/65. Lady Hermione Blackwood to Marquess of Dufferin and Ava, 31 October, n.d.

extent, and some women stayed home during shoots because of this,²⁴ increasingly, there was a role for elite women within the sporting world. This pre-existing emphasis on the appropriateness of aristocratic women in sport may have influenced the curricula within the expanding girls' schools of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; certainly historians like Ross McKibbin have recognised a much greater emphasis on sport in the upwardly-mobile middle and upper-class institutions of the twentieth century than was given to working class girls in either a domestic or an educational sphere.²⁵ Ladies were increasingly a part of shooting groups through the 1890s and 1900s, although it was still sufficiently unusual for a woman to be a skilful and enthusiastic shot that, in a letter to his brother, Norman Leslie noted 'a lady who was very keen on sport.'²⁶ Theresa, marchioness of Londonderry, was known as a crack shot with a rifle, and her eldest son, Charles and daughter-in-law, Lady Edith, shared this love of hunting, which occupied them during their honeymoon at Dunrobin Castle, Scotland, and throughout their marriage.²⁷ Women additionally played a role in watersports: Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, later Queen Elizabeth, was known to be exceptional at game fishing, and the aristocratic women of the north of Ireland played a crucial role in both the sporting and the social aspects of the yachting and sailing world of Ulster.²⁸ Female gamekeepers were also not unknown, at least at Castle Rossmore, where Lord Rossmore encouraged Mrs. Holland to take over the position of gamekeeper when her husband died.²⁹

Where foxhunting was the dominant aspect of landed culture in the south of Ireland, as was so comprehensively depicted in the literature of Somerville and Ross, this was not the case in the north. Yachting seems to have been the defining leisure pursuit of these aristocratic families, and the culture of yachting was embraced by the elite of the province as a rival to that which consumed the attentions of the landed classes elsewhere in Ireland and in the hunting counties of England. Sailing and yachting were extremely popular across Europe and the Americas during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the landed classes of Ulster extended considerable effort toward conquering the seas in true imperial

²⁴ PRONI, Dufferin Papers, D/1231/M/8/1. Lady Victoria Plunkett to Lady Hermione Blackwood, 5 April 1905

²⁵ Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, p.368

²⁶ PRONI, Leslie Papers, MIC/606/M/1/5/21. Norman Leslie to Shane Leslie, n.d.

²⁷ Hyde, *The Londonderrys*, pp.88-89

²⁸ McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, p.368

²⁹ Rossmore, *Things I Can Tell*, pp. 205, 208

fashion. As a social tool, yachting played a crucial part in the adaptation of the elite during this period, and their emphasis on establishing the role of Ulster within the yachting and sailing coterie demonstrates their social and cultural reaction to the waning influence they claimed in the political arena. While in the north of England and in Scotland, where there was also a limited culture of fox-hunting, game hunting and shooting were used to attract money and power to the estates of the elite. Elsewhere in Ireland, the landed classes, especially the county gentry, clung to the leisure and culture of fox-hunting, which rapidly fell victim to intimidation from the 1880s onward.³⁰ In Ulster, however, from the mid-nineteenth century yachting was established as the primary realm of sporting interaction on these elite estates, pulling those who would otherwise have not visited the north of Ireland from the nucleus of power in southern England to the estates of Ulster's elite. Additionally, the adoption of this sport, in particular, as their own, connected the elite of the area to the socially influential across Ireland, Great Britain, and Europe, including royalty and heads of state. Through the use of water sports, the aristocracy of the north of Ireland and their neighbours consciously allied themselves with politicians, the immensely wealthy, and the luminaries of the arts and literary scenes, both meeting with them at the fixtures of the yachting and sailing season across Europe, and drawing them to their estates for their own yachting season, especially on Lough Erne, where weekly races were held from May through September.

Outside the north of Ireland, yachting played an important role as a tool for establishing social connections with the highest society. Alvin Jackson has recognised the importance of the boating world in forging informal connections among the elite families of the area, and in his biography of Colonel Edward Saunderson, notes that 'Irish yachting provided Saunderson with a propertied social network, and ultimately with an important political audience... His passion was shared by political leaders and by British and European royalty.'³¹ For Saunderson, who did not attend public school, leisured pursuits were exceptionally important as a means to make up for the connections he had lost by not being integrated in his early life into the community of the powerful. However, even for peers who had spent their lives—from birth, through school and university, and into their adult networks

³⁰ L.P Curtis Jr., 'Stopping the Hunt, 1881-82: An Aspect of the Irish Land War' in C.H.E. Philpin (ed), *Nationalism and Popular Protest in Ireland* (Cambridge, 1987)

³¹ Jackson, *Colonel Edward Saunderson*, p.43

of marriage, residence, and politics—within this community, the continual reaffirmation of the shared values of the elite was crucial in supporting their status and social relevance.

Just as landowners like Saunderson integrated themselves within this community through leisure practices, so these entertainments helped introduce those families who would later form alliances through marriage.³² The involvement of women in most of Ulster's sporting pursuits is an important part of the establishment of this network, but this is especially true for the water sports of the aristocracy: all of these pursuits were considered acceptable, even required, pursuits of the aristocratic woman, and the social aspect of the culture of yachting, in Cowes or the Mediterranean as much as on Lough Erne, made the presence of a wide range of aristocratic family members important.

The symbolic role of women in watersports was also an aspect of this culture: boats are traditionally named for women, and there is an interconnection between the names of aristocratic daughters from this group and the boats of some of Ulster's premier families. While serving as Ambassador in Rome, the marquess of Dufferin, who had previously published extensively on sailing, built and sailed *The Lady Hermione*, a craft he had designed and named after one of his three daughters,³³ while the 4th earl of Kilmorey used this connection differently, alternately naming his eldest daughter Patricia after his first sailing vessel.³⁴ The Dufferins and Kilmoreys both sailed not only off the coast of Ireland near their Down estates, but also abroad, and the pursuit played a part in the leisure activities of a number of Lord Dufferin's diplomatic missions, especially in Constantinople and in Italy.

Many members of the elite, including Ulster's largest land-owners, spent the first two weeks of August at Cowes, on the Isle of Wight, where Society would congregate to watch boat races, often in the presence of the Royal Family. Simon Novell-Smith has commented on the 'limited appeal' of Cowes, which apparently was evident despite the picturesque beauty of the place and the exclusivity of the crowd.³⁵ Novell-Smith's disdain however, does not seem to have been shared by the bulk of the aristocracy: Cowes Week was one of the few

³² Jackson, *Colonel Edward Saunderson*, p.188

³³ Charles E. Drummond Black, *The Marquess of Dufferin and Ava* (London, 190), p.178; Harold Nicolson, *Helen's Tower* (London, 1937), p.100; PRONI, Dufferin Papers, D/1231/M/2/35. Harriot, Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava to Lady Hermione Blackwood, 28 August, n.d.; Frederick, marquess of Dufferin and Ava, *Letters from High Latitudes* (London, 1991)

³⁴ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/D/76/1. Diary of Norah, countess of Kilmorey, February 1921

³⁵ Nowell-Smith, *Edwardian England*, p.455

events for which the 5th Marquess of Londonderry was willing to leave his preferred home at Plas Machynlleth, Wales,³⁶ while for Lady Leonie Leslie, who was first introduced to the Prince and Princess of Wales at Cowes as a young American debutante in the 1870s, it was ‘the best time of the year.’³⁷ For much of the elite, Cowes Week actually forced the end of the London Season, after which sportsmen would embark on their autumnal pursuits of shooting from mid-August onwards, or in the case of the families of Ulster, return to Lough Erne for the close of the season there in September.³⁸

Out of season, sailing remained a large part of the lives of many landlords in Ulster, and aristocrats like the 4th earl of Kilmorey and Theresa, marchioness of Londonderry, sailed almost daily off the coast of County Down, only curtailed in their activities by occasional gales or (in the turbulent 1910s) the threat of gun-running.³⁹ The growing importance of the sport is indicated by the establishment of the Ulster Yacht Club in 1866, and the award of a royal patent to the club in 1869, transforming the club’s title to the Royal Ulster Yacht Club, and increasing its prestige. The site of the club from 1898 on the south side of Belfast Lough in Bangor appealed to the landowners of the area, including Theresa Londonderry, who remained a member of the Club until her death.⁴⁰ The role of the club within the sport was crucial in establishing and reaffirming the communal aspects of the pursuit: as well as adjudicating rules and competitions, the club offered an environment in which members, both men and women, could meet informally, and where social events could be organised. The opening party for the new premises, on 15 April 1899, was the first of these events, offering a reception for 300 ladies and gentlemen, as well as a more elite dinner for 60 members and their private guests.

The pursuit of sport off the Down coasts was only one of arenas for elite sailors in the north of Ireland, and the society of the families such as the Enniskillens, Ernes, and Belmores, was centred on the sport to be found on Lough Erne during the summer months. The Lough-side estates of these families formed the core of the Erne boating circuit, and it was the competition between local landowners (who formed a complex cousinship not only

³⁶ Hyde, *The Londonderrys*, p.59

³⁷ Terence Dooley, *The Decline of the Big House in Ireland* (Dublin, 2001), p.49

³⁸ PRONI, Dufferin Papers, D/1231/M/2/19,49. Harriot, Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava to Lady Hermione Blackwood, n.d.

³⁹ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/F/13. Photograph Album, 1911; Hyde, *The Londonderrys*, p.111

⁴⁰ PRONI, Theresa Londonderry Papers, D/2846/14/1. Envelope of tradesmen’s accounts to Theresa, dowager marchioness of Londonderry, 1916

with each other, but also with other families in the area) that stimulated the boat-building industry in the locality during the second half of the nineteenth century.⁴¹ For the Earl of Erne and his family, their principal place (and further, the central place of the aristocracy) in this sporting world was assured by the existence of the headquarters of the Lough Erne Yacht Club within the boathouse at Crom Castle.⁴² The situation of the Yacht Club on their property offered a similar centrality to the earl and the Crichton family as was granted elsewhere in Britain to the Master of the Hounds: both social and sporting events were under their leadership and patronage, guaranteeing that any connections made through the sport would be under their auspices.

The Lough Erne Yacht Club had been founded in 1837, marking it as one of the oldest boating institutions in Ireland, but it was from the 1860s onward that the sporting environment on the Lough became formalised and integrated with the social world of southern Ulster.⁴³ From 1865 an annual regatta was held on Lough Erne, as well as weekly events and informal ‘buckles’ between rival crews, ‘as fiercely contested as if we were sailing for the Americas Cup.’⁴⁴ The entertainment on the estates in the area (including Crom Castle, Castle Coole, and Florence Court, as well as the homes of local families like the Maxwells and the Saundersons) took advantage of the picturesque environment offered by the Lough, and elite visitors came from throughout Ireland and Britain to take advantage of the sport. The passion of Ulster’s aristocracy for sailing and yachting was shared by the majority of the landed classes, and sailing was transformed from a solely sporting event into a social one by the institution of the annual Lough Erne Regatta Ball, held on the evening of the close of sport in September, and attended by families from the locality, such as the Saundersons, the Ernes, the Enniskillens, and the Belmores.⁴⁵

Although the season of country house visiting generally did not begin until August, by the 1890s the amusements of boating on Lough Erne were calling friends from London as

⁴¹ PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1939/27/14. ‘Some facts about Lough Erne boats from information supplied by Lieut. H. Gartside Tipping’, n.d.

⁴² Sean O’Reilly, *Irish Houses & Gardens: from the Archives of Country Life* (London, 1998), p.184

⁴³ Reginald Lucas, *Colonel Saunderson, M.P. A Memoir* (London, 1908), pp.18-19

⁴⁴ Jackson, *Colonel Edward Saunderson*, p.43; PRONI, Edward Saunderson Papers, T/2996/8/1. Delap Memoir, 1907

⁴⁵ PRONI, Enniskillen Papers, D/1702/9/4. Scrapbook mention of Lough Erne Regatta Ball, 7 September 1871

early as the first of May to both Castle Saunderson and to Crom Castle.⁴⁶ The area also inspired the artists and authors brought there through commissions or friendship with the families. Reginald Lucas, contemporary biographer of Colonel Edward Saunderson and a protégé of Theresa, marchioness of Londonderry, was enchanted with the society he found on the lakes in the area and praised it at length in his political memoir, giving a pleasant picture of the social life of the area's families in the 1890s:

Competitors and spectators alike came ashore for tea, and the little community was to be seen in its most sociable and intimate phase. Nothing more pleasant and attractive can be imagined than the spectacle of Crom Bay upon those sunny afternoons: the modern castle confronting the neighbouring ruins sloping lawns, wooded paths, and gay flower-gardens, on shore animated groups; on the blue lake a flotilla of dawdling yachts, punts, and canoes, with a steam-launch coming in from Castle Saunderson, Lanesborough Lodge, or St. Hubert's.⁴⁷

John Ynur Burges, another visitor to Crom Castle, emphasised the romantic, baronial aspects of life in the castellated mansions of the Erne Basin, and the continual use of the Lough for transportation, even during the autumn months: 'The next morning I opened my casement... at an early hour, and greeted with lively pleasure my old friend, Lough Erne. A steamer and some other craft with a procession of small boats were floating about.'⁴⁸ Alvin Jackson has suggested the yachting culture of South Ulster was 'more social and less individualistic' than among fox-hunting society elsewhere in Ireland.⁴⁹ The international scope of the pursuit, and the specific attractions of the society provided by Lough Erne and the homes which ringed it, offered a set of connections that may not have necessarily forthcoming from fox-hunting Society. Both by attracting Society to their homes in the north of Ireland and by travelling to the south of England or to Europe to participate in international sporting events, the aristocracy of Ulster integrated themselves into an international sporting community that offered vast rewards in social and political terms.

Shooting and the hunting of game was an important aspect of the entertaining schedule in Ulster, and as such, the management and recording of game was central to elite life in the countryside. The role of game in estate life is underlined by the place held by game on the

⁴⁶ PRONI, Edward Saunderson Papers, MIC281/1. Clippings and photographs included in microfilm copy of Edward Saunderson's political and personal journal, c.1890s

⁴⁷ Lucas, *Saunderson*, p.225

⁴⁸ PRONI, T/1282/2 pp.158-166. Diary of John Ynur Burges of Parkanaur, Castlecaulfield, Co. Tyrone, 25-27 November 1863

⁴⁹ Jackson, *Colonel Edward Saunderson*, p.188

elite table, an indicator of the ability of the elite to actively and practically use symbolism throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to enhance their position as landowners. The developing character of the shooting world in the early twentieth century also had an important affect on estate life, reflecting the changing role of the aristocrat in the countryside, and demonstrating how both the character of the aristocracy and the local climate in which they found themselves affected their ability to alter their patterns of life. Hunting had long played an important role within Irish life, and increasingly was associated with the society of the Anglo-Irish through literature and the contemporary media. In the north of Ireland, however, the culture of the hunt was different from that experienced in the south of Ireland and around the Pale: primarily, because foxes were not managed for the purpose of sport until after the Second World War, Ulster lacked the culture of fox hunting which defined rural society in the south of Ireland. Fox hunting remained an important leisure practise for these families, but it was one pursued away from home, while their leisure on their own estates and on those of their neighbours instead centred on the previously discussed yachting society of the lakes and coasts, as well as on game hunting, both with the gun, and with sight-hounds trained to chase either deer or hare. In the twentieth century, the distinctive nature of this hunting society was altered, in many cases, intentionally, to conform with the pressures of local life, demonstrating the ways in which the aristocracy found themselves both able to adapt their patterns of leisure to modern change, and the ways in which their traditional practises were rendered untenable in the climate of the twentieth century.

Crucial in the value of an estate as a location for nineteenth and twentieth century hunting was the size of the bags, and these statistics formed an important aspect of many reports of elite hunts, whether in newspapers, sporting magazines, individual hunting journals, or personal correspondence. The scale of the shoots on the estates of the Ulster aristocracy demonstrate that the bags on these estates seem to have been smaller than those found on aristocratic estates in Northern England and in Scotland.⁵⁰ At Baronscourt over a weekend, four guns would generally shoot fewer than one hundred birds,⁵¹ while in the less formal atmosphere of Castle Leslie, the bags were remarkable only in their tiny scale. Norman and Shane Leslie shared a passion for shooting, but in general the hunts at Castle

⁵⁰ While in 1888 the large Buccleuch estates in Scotland produced a massive total of almost 18,000 birds and beasts, the scope of the lands, the geography of Ulster's estates, the number of guns, and the numbers of game were much smaller in Ireland. (Hamilton, *Forty Years On*, p.136)

⁵¹ Lord Ernest Hamilton, *Forty Years On* (London, 1922), p.70

Leslie were informal and small: as a young man Norman hit a total of seven birds and three rabbits in a week with an old gun of his father's.⁵² When the Londonderrys invited Lord Dufferin to Mount Stewart for a shooting party in the winter of 1895, Dufferin returned the favour by inviting Lord Castlereagh to Clandeboy to shoot ducks: in total they hit 162 in an afternoon.⁵³

In part, these limited shoots may have been due not only to the relative size of the estates, but also to the attitudes of their owners. While families like the Leslies were content to allow the game to give moderate pleasure to family members of all ages, on the vast Scottish Buccleuch estates, game was systematically managed and continually improved, especially under the eye of Lord George William Montagu-Douglas-Scott, son of the 6th duke and his wife, Louisa (née Hamilton).⁵⁴ Among Ulster aristocrats this sort of massive game management for sport and profit was rare, although the importance of game conservation in Ulster was evidenced in an 1889 court case brought by the earl of Caledon against two poachers on his county Tyrone estates. The *Belfast News-Letter* reported that as a 'resident gentleman' the Earl 'spent a large sum of money in preserving the game [on his estate], and if he were debarred from the pleasure the game would give him and his family he would simply go and live elsewhere.'⁵⁵ While this style of reporting may not have discouraged some of the earl's more dissatisfied tenants from poaching, the newspaper obviously made a point of recognising that the hunting of game was a primary pleasure for landowners, and that the protection of the game was therefore a top priority.

Additionally, a great deal of meticulous effort was put into the keeping of game records. Details of shoots were kept in specially bound books, recorded on printed cards, and used to draw comparisons of profits and takes between disparate years. Illustrated cards were made up to record the shooting at Mourne Park, where pheasants, woodcock, wild duck, hares, and especially rabbits, were all plentiful.⁵⁶ While his father, the 4th earl of Enniskillen, had kept his shooting records in a personal journal, the 5th earl, began his game records in 1895 as Lord Cole, and the book—in beautifully bound and purpose-made oxblood calf-

⁵² PRONI, Leslie Papers, MIC/606/M/1/5/2. Norman Leslie to Shane Leslie, n.d.

⁵³ PRONI, Dufferin Papers, D/1231/M/1/24. 1st marquess of Dufferin and Ava to Lady Hermione Blackwood, 9 February 1895

⁵⁴ Hamilton, *Forty Years On*, p.154

⁵⁵ *The Belfast News-Letter*, 16 December 1889

⁵⁶ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/H/14/1-12. Papers about game and shooting at Mourne Park, 1904, 1908, 1910, 1924, 1928

leather emblazoned with the letter ‘C’—was used well into the 1960s to record shooting and fishing on the properties at Florence Court and Crom Park.⁵⁷ Lord Cole continued his records during the Great War, and during the autumns and winters of 1914 and 1915 he recorded two particularly good seasons for grouse, though the takings were by the gamekeeper, as the blood sport of the aristocracy had been transferred from the covers to the war fronts.⁵⁸ After the war, the price of managing the game on the estates increased with inflation, as is evidenced by the comparisons made at Mourne Park by Lord Kilmorey between the prices and profits in 1904 and in 1924. The growth in the costs was primarily from the annual salary of the gamekeeper, which increased during these twenty years by more than £100.⁵⁹

The game killed on the estates of the Ulster aristocracy had value beyond entertainment, both in actual and in symbolic terms. The records of the gamekeepers and kitchens show that most of the animals shot were used, either within the kitchens for the consumption of the family and staff, or off the estate by butchers and game dealers. Wild meat was a frequent feature on the tables of the nineteenth and early twentieth century aristocracy: game was so much a feature of the elite diet that Harold Nicolson was certain that no Edwardian meal was complete without ptarmigan.⁶⁰ Additionally, game was often sent as a gift. This was frequent within a family, and packages of birds, rabbits, or deer often travelled from Baronscourt to England, allowing the dowager duchess of Abercorn to enjoy Irish game on her table at Coates, Sussex.⁶¹ Presents of game were also often sent to friends and family in the locality, and the earls of Erne often sent birds to nearby families at Florence Court, Mount Stewart, and Castle Saunderson, as well as to their tenants and to business or social associates in Enniskillen and Belfast.⁶² The symbolic value of the produce of the estate becomes particularly clear in these gifts to tenants and social inferiors: Toby Barnard has recognised that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the social hierarchy was reflected

⁵⁷ PRONI, Enniskillen Papers, D/1702/10/7A-B. Hunting Diaries of the 4th earl of Enniskillen, 1881-1886

⁵⁸ PRONI, Enniskillen Papers, D/1702/6/7. Game and Fishing Book of 5th, 6th, and 7th earls of Enniskillen, 1895-1964

⁵⁹ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/H/14/1-12. Papers about game and shooting at Mourne Park, 1904, 1908, 1910, 1924, 1928

⁶⁰ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/E/4. Newspaper cutting in scrapbook, c. 1899-1901; Priestley, *The Edwardians*, p.65

⁶¹ PRONI, Abercorn Papers, D/623/A/26,27,28,38,39. Dowager duchess of Abercorn to 2nd duke of Abercorn, 27 Dec 1887-29 December 1888

⁶² PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1939/30/13. Game book for Crom Castle Estate, 1887-1932.

in the quality of game sent to each recipient.⁶³ Additionally, by reminding their associates of their tie to the estate and asserting their right to manage that land, aristocrats were also reminding their tenants and associates of their traditional and continuing control over their patrimonies, and of their role as benevolent, paternalistic caretakers of the land and nation.

Within Ulster, the culture of shooting did not prosper in the twentieth century in the same way as it did in Britain. In Scotland and northern England, the increased commercialisation of the sport encouraged landowners to welcome to their estates rich weekenders who rented the covers for the privilege of shooting there, made possible by advances in transport and gun technology that shortened the travel time and allowed even amateur shooters to achieve proficiency within a brief period.⁶⁴ Newspaper advertisements for sporting estates, which had existed since the eighteenth century, boomed during this period.⁶⁵ Just as Ulster's role as a central breeding ground for racehorses was not quite successful, so the geographic, political, and ecological situation of Ulster thwarted the efforts of the area's land owners to profit from game shooting as did their counterparts in northern England and in Scotland. In part, this was due to the previously discussed differences in land conservation and game management. Additionally, the travel time in reaching Ireland from London and the Home Counties was comparatively high by the twentieth century, especially as increasingly fast rail links made the northern reaches of Britain more accessible. At the same time, the political situation within Ireland further discouraged casual sporting visitors, who were additionally offered greater scope for the hunt of more prized game (stags, grouse) on Britain's northern moorland. In this, Ulster's aristocracy were offered few opportunities to adapt these practises to the changing culture of the modern era.

The breeding and training of hunting dogs was a related pursuit that interested many of Ulster's aristocracy, and in which they experienced a moderate success. Those peers who

⁶³ Toby Barnard, *Making the Grand Figure: Lives and Possessions in Ireland, 1641-1770* (New Haven, 2004), p.209. Linda Colley and F.M.L. Thompson have noted that an aspect of the appeal of fox-hunting was the inedibility of the quarry: that taking part for the sake of sport, not winning for the sake of nourishment, made the chase of the fox, rather than other quarry, so popular with Britain's elite. (Colley, *Britons*, p.171; F.M.L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the 19th Century* (London, 1963), p.145) This doubtless had an influence on the growth of the sport, but this aspect of the sport demonstrates some of its limitations, as well: unlike edible game, foxes could not be given as presents, and therefore did not serve to remind those who had not been involved in the sport of the hereditary rights of the landlord, and of his munificence.

⁶⁴ Cannadine, *Decline of the British Aristocracy*, p.364

⁶⁵ Colley, *Britons*, p.173

bred dogs in Ulster generally bred working breeds, primarily those who could be trained to assist with the estate shooting. However, while aristocrats like the 4th earl of Kilmorey and Viscount Cole (later 5th earl of Enniskillen) did develop programmes of dog breeding on their estates, they were pursued for private, rather than commercial, ends. At Florence Court, Lord Cole encouraged the continuance of the breeding programme even during the Great War, and was on the look-out for good breeding dogs while he was at the Front in France, where he purchased a red setter for his kennels.⁶⁶ In the 1920s, the earl of Kilmorey introduced Retrievers (both Labrador and Flat-Coated) and Spaniels (Working Cocker and Springer) into his kennels.⁶⁷ The patterns of dog breeding in Ulster may be indicative of the geographical differences experienced by the peers of Ulster in the use of their estates. Dog breeding, like horse breeding, was inevitably symbolic: the use of the dog as a symbol of fidelity is almost hackneyed in its frequency. However, dog breeding on these estates was primarily practical: it was a means to an end, which was the support of the shoot. The spaniels, setters, and retrievers of the Florence Court and Mourne Park estates were as much a part of the world of game hunting as their owners. While the record of breeding of racing and game dogs on these estates is considerable, there is no mention of breeding programmes for scent-hounds or terriers, again demonstrating the lack of influence of fox-hunting cultures on the sporting culture of Ulster in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Fox hunting in Ireland has traditionally been viewed as legendary, particularly in the 1870s,⁶⁸ encouraged by the ties between the Anglo-Irish and the sport in literature, most notably in the works of Anthony Trollope and of Somerville and Ross, which depict the society of the Irish gentry as genial, sporting, and perhaps gauche. In examining the role fox hunting played within the sporting patterns of Ulster's aristocratic society, an important point comes to the fore in terms of geography. The archival and material evidence of these northern landed families indicates the overwhelming popularity of the sport. However, almost exclusively, the hunts followed by the elite of Ulster during this period were not actually in Ulster. The aristocracy of Ulster, like their peers across Ireland and Britain, enjoyed, and

⁶⁶ PRONI, Enniskillen Papers, D/1702/12/50/18. Letters from Lord Cole to his parents, the earl and countess of Enniskillen, 1914-1918

⁶⁷ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/D/78/1-30. Papers of Lord Kilmorey relating to hare coursing at Mourne Park, 1920s-1930s

⁶⁸ Mark Bence-Jones, *Twilight of the Ascendancy* (London, 1987), p.1

regularly participated in, fox hunting, but these activities were based farther south in Ireland, primarily in the area around Dublin, and in the Home Counties of England.

In their panegyric to the Irish hunt, Claude Costecalde and Jack Gallagher associate the history of fox-hunting in Ireland with the areas which experienced plantation in the fifteenth and sixteenth-centuries: fox-hunting was established on the east coast and around the Pale, while the traditional pursuits of stag hunting remained predominant within the non-colonised areas.⁶⁹ Ulster, however, seems to have experienced this association of sporting and plantation influences differently. The result of the predominantly Scottish culture that was imported into the province in the seventeenth century was that, as in the rest of Ireland, the sporting preferences of the new landholders affected the local culture. As in Scotland, so in Ulster: without an existing tradition of fox hunting within the society of the new Planters, there was no place for a culture of fox-hunting in Ulster until well into the twentieth century.⁷⁰

Instead, Ulster tended toward stag hunting or hare coursing, a sport referred to as 'melodious', in comparison to the pursuit of any other quarry.⁷¹ Local packs of hounds grew from the eighteenth century onwards: the early association between hunting and sociability is underlined by the establishment of the Downe Hunt Club in 1757, a dining club which met in Downpatrick and Newtownards.⁷² Equally, the militaristic influences seen in the intricate organisation, social requirements, and regalia of the hunt throughout the United Kingdom were in evidence within the hare and stag hunting society of Ulster during the nineteenth century: the pack of the Fermanagh Harriers was established by the military regiments of the area.⁷³ This influence was reflected in the specialised local hunt uniforms of green and buff. As Eric Hobsbawm has recognised, the increased complexity of social activities like hunting were justified under the banner of tradition: the 'invention' of these traditions was most likely to occur during times when 'the rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which 'old' traditions had been designed.'⁷⁴ In 1865 Lord Dufferin founded The Dufferin Harriers, but by 1881 the mismanagement of the finances of the pack

⁶⁹ Costecalde and Gallagher, *Hunting in Ireland*, p.17

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p.28

⁷¹ Arthur Stringer, *The Experienced Huntsman* (Belfast, 1977), p.27

⁷² Costecalde and Gallagher, *Hunting in Ireland*, p.100

⁷³ *ibid.*, p.114

⁷⁴ Eric Hobsbawm, 'Inventing Tradition', in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), p.4

led to the sale of the dogs at auction.⁷⁵ At Caledon, in county Tyrone, hare coursing was also pursued in a less formalized manner in the late 1870s and early 1880s. Primarily organized for the benefit of the tenantry, the coursing was regularly attended by at least one member of the Alexander family, and sometimes by the entire family from Caledon as well as the neighbourhood gentry.⁷⁶ From this point onwards, the organisation of the hunt in Ulster became increasingly formalised, and the 1880s saw the establishment of the County Down Staghounds and the East Down Harriers.⁷⁷ This is reflective of the contemporaneous increase in the formality of the sport elsewhere in the United Kingdom during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and again offers support for Hobsbawm's suggestion that 'traditional' activities became increasingly important in the face of contest and change. As real aristocratic power and authority began to be challenged in the countryside, sporting traditions like the hunt—whether the fox hunt in southern Ireland and England, or stag and harrier hunts in Ulster—were shored up, both offering their participants a greater feeling of security through their 'traditional' associations and ceremonies.

Some of the most successful hunting in the area was actually centred on an area that saw a high level of conflict (within the relative context of Ulster) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Newry Hunt, established in 1820, was based around the County Down town, marked for its equal split between Catholic and Protestant residents, and called the 'Gateway to Ulster' by Wilfred Ewart.⁷⁸ The hunt, which began as a pack of harriers, was rooted in the involvement of the Kilmorey family in this sport, which was formalised on the Mourne Park estate by the 1870s. By the turn of the twentieth century, the estate was famous for the meets held there. Despite trouble in the area in the early part of the twentieth century, in the 1920s the meets on the estate were extremely tightly organised, and included up to ten separate cash prize competitions. Lord Kilmorey began breeding dogs for the coursing, usually greyhound-crosses, in the 1910s, increasing in output and variety in the 1920s as the hare coursing was gradually discontinued on the estate.⁷⁹ By the time the earl closed the kennels for hunting purposes in the 1930s, the locality was already well-known for the quality of the hounds, demonstrating both the role the area's aristocracy had played in the

⁷⁵ Costecalde and Gallagher, *Hunting in Ireland*, p.101

⁷⁶ *The Belfast Newsletter*, 18 November 1879, 19 January 1882

⁷⁷ Costecalde and Gallagher, *Hunting in Ireland*, pp.96,210

⁷⁸ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/D/76/1. Writings of Wilfred Ewart

⁷⁹ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/D/78/1-30. Papers of Lord Kilmorey relating to hare coursing at Mourne Park, 1920s-1930s

development of the area's sport, and the ability and willingness of certain peers to alter their leisure patterns to conform with local pressure.⁸⁰

Despite the lack of provision for fox hunting around their Ulster estates, the aristocracy of the area followed the hunt with verve, whether in the media while at home, or while elsewhere in Britain. As well as following their own coverage in Society and sports journals and newspapers,⁸¹ some aristocrats kept specific hunting journals, in which they recorded their mounts, the weather, the condition of the site, and the success of the hunt, while others kept more general journals that came to be dominated almost entirely by descriptions of their sporting pursuits. The purpose-made hunting journal of the 4th earl of Enniskillen is a testament to his dedication to sport: on average he hunted or shot 27 days a month, only missing Sundays or days with a very heavy frost.⁸² A very similar journal was kept ten years later by Henry, viscount Crichton, in which he recorded his hunts with the Kildare and Cheshire hounds. Most notably, viscount Crichton's journal records his frustration with the ways his military schedule had a tendency to interfere with his sport. In January to March 1897 he noted: 'Only 10 days hunting. Took second leave but was made Adjutant Jan 1st'.⁸³ Luckily, the professional interruption was only temporary: by January 1898 Lord Crichton was regularly hunting once again.

The enthusiasm of the landed classes for fox hunting seems to have barely flickered in the face of any challenge, no less that presented by intentional hunt disturbances from the 1880s onwards. However, the challenge faced in the north was different from that in the rest

⁸⁰ Costecalde and Gallagher, *Hunting in Ireland*, p.174. Lord Kilmorey continued to breed both whippets and greyhounds for coursing and drag hunts in the interwar years, but stopped breeding for active hare hunting, in line with the growing formalisation of dog racing in the mid-twentieth century. (PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/D/78/1-30. Papers of Lord Kilmorey relating to hare coursing at Mourne Park, 1920s-1930s; McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, p.363)

⁸¹ This is especially true of Derrick Westenra, Lord Rossmore, who with his brother-in-law, Major Henry Augustus 'Sugar' Candy, became associated in particular with the Meath Hounds during the time that the Candys held a hunting box at Culmullen. Both Rossmore and Candy also later rode with the Kildare hounds in the company of Lady Cadogan, the Vicereine, occasioning frequent mentions in the hunting journals of the time (PRONI, Rossmore Papers. T/2929/13/101. From *The Field*, 23 December 1893, no. 2139, p.944; T/2929/13/103. From *The Field*, 11 January 1896, no. 2246, "Hunting Notes From Ireland"; T/2929/13/113, n.d.). As has been discussed in the introduction to this study, and throughout the analysis, the preservation of historical material (in this instance, newspaper clippings) is crucial evidence in determining the personal priorities of these families. The increased recognition of the role the printed media played in the social reputation of these figures is key to their ability to adapt to the social climate of the period. Individuals like Derrick, Lord Rossmore, placed an enormous value on their social role as leaders of sport, and kept a record of the means by which this position was perpetuated.

⁸² PRONI, Enniskillen Papers, D/1702/10/7A-B. Hunting Diaries of the 4th earl of Enniskillen, 1881-1886

⁸³ PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1939/27/3. Hunting Journal of viscount Crichton, October 1895- January 1897

of Ireland. Overwhelmingly, when agrarian tensions forced the aristocratic predator to reschedule his sport, this occurred in the south of Ireland, and generally targeted the fox hunt, rather the harrier or stag hunting packs favoured in Ulster. Of course, there were exceptions, especially in the areas along the Ulster border. In 1901, the harrier hounds at Newry were poisoned, forcing the hunt to return home.⁸⁴ Later, in the 1920s, considered the heyday of hare-coursing at Mourne Park, the sport began to be widely criticised as cruel in the local press. By the 1930s the 4th earl of Kilmorey intentionally discontinued the sport on his estates for this reason.⁸⁵ He may have been influenced not only by the increasingly negative reactions of the general public to the sport in the local press, but also by anonymous personal attacks, including a note sent to him in 1923. ‘Oh SHAME on your name, and on the name of ‘SPORT’,’ the note exclaims, ‘Throwing dazed and Benumbed Creatures to dogs, OH! OH! OH! Bring the kittens out next time.’⁸⁶

These criticisms were, however, of the cruelty of the sport to the quarry, compared to the politically and economically motivated attacks on huntsmen, hounds, and foxes in the rest of Ireland.⁸⁷ The sport of hare coursing was in many ways more inclusive than the pursuit of the fox: it was less expensive, and the close connections between the sport and the related pastime of whippet-breeding, which has been associated by Ross McKibbin both with Ireland and with upper-working-class leisure time,⁸⁸ provided a less divisive, and therefore less easily criticised, rural pastime. While this wider spectrum of interest no doubt limited the appeal of hare-coursing for the landed classes, likely directly affecting its lack of popularity outside the north of Ireland, within the region, it formed an alternate rural hunting forum to the fox-centric society of the southern counties of Ireland. The hunting culture in the north of Ireland was one in which not only substantial landowners and farmers could participate, but which was organised both in elitist form (as represented by the splendid green and buff uniforms of the Fermanagh Harriers and the convivial aspects of the Downe Hunt Club), and in a more inclusive form in which Ulster aristocracy participated (as in the meets held at both Mourne Park and Caledon throughout this period).

⁸⁴ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/D/15/1-6. Diary of the countess of Kilmorey, 18 January 1901

⁸⁵ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/D/78/1-30. Papers of Lord Kilmorey relating to hare coursing at Mourne Park, 1920s-1930s

⁸⁶ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/D/78/1-30. Papers of Lord Kilmorey relating to hare coursing at Mourne Park, 1920s-1930s

⁸⁷ Curtis, 'Stopping the Hunt' in Philpin, *Nationalism and Popular Protest*

⁸⁸ McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, pp.362-363

The role of the horse within aristocratic life, particularly that of the Anglo-Irish, must stand without question. As a symbol of privilege dating from far beyond the years of the Penal Laws, in Ireland ‘worship of the horse was universal.’⁸⁹ To discuss aristocratic culture without discussing the role of the horse—as a symbol, as an accessory to a number of pursuits tied intrinsically to the elite, as a means of transport, as a responsibility for care, and as an expense—is to fail to create an occupied past, and to ignore the central place equestrian activities played within the daily life of aristocratic Ulster. In general, the connection between the aristocrat and horse was one forged in childhood and continued throughout life, and the emphasis on sport that involved horses (especially hunting, polo, and racing) is particularly clear for young men from landed circles, lasting throughout childhood and clearly influencing the military careers of many of these men.⁹⁰ Within the military, the horse remained important as a symbol of elite authority until well into the 1930s,⁹¹ and defenders of equestrian sports such as fox hunting, which had obvious links to the cavalry in the dress of the hunters and in the hierarchy and pursuit of the hunt, have used the contributions fox-hunting has made to the fitness and character of the gentlemanly armed forces even into the twenty-first century.⁹²

The important role of the horse was reflected clearly in the central place of the horse in estate life: horses were the one relative constant of Irish country life in the nineteenth century, according to L.P. Curtis, Jr.⁹³ Physically, the central role of the horse was represented in the provision of the aristocracy’s stables. Additionally, the role of horses in the favoured sports of the landed classes, such as some forms of hunting, solidified the importance of this symbol for the landed classes, especially in the face of agrarian divisions and threat in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Born from these elite stables

⁸⁹ Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy*, p.21

⁹⁰ Raymond Carr, *English Fox Hunting: A History* (London, 1976), p.133; Shane Leslie seems to have been (in many ways) the exception that illustrates the rule: he didn’t ride (although he did shoot), which is revealed in letters from his brother Norman, who expressed his love of horses from a very young age. (PRONI, Leslie Papers, MIC/606/M/1/5/1. Norman Leslie to Shane Leslie, n.d.) While stationed across the Empire during his military career, Norman claims to have done very little but play polo, which he adored, but which he was well aware excited little interest in his unconventional brother (PRONI, Leslie Papers, MIC/606/M/1/5/32. Norman Leslie to Shane Leslie, n.d.). Charles, Lord Castlereagh (later 7th marquess of Londonderry) had a similarly limited scope of interest just before his entrance into Parliament: given a choice, Lord Castlereagh would have stayed in the military, as he was interested in polo, not politics, but familial expectation outweighed personal interest. (Hyde, *The Londonderrys*, p.104)

⁹¹ McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, p.35

⁹² Colley, *Britons*, p.172; Costecalde and Gallagher, *Hunting in Ireland*, p.14

⁹³ Curtis, ‘Stopping the Hunt’, p.351

was a culture of horse-breeding and racing, which became increasingly popular among these families around the turn of the twentieth century, increasingly integrating these peers with the wealthy, status-conscious leaders of the racing world from across the United Kingdom.

However, the horse may not be as appropriate a symbol for the aristocracy of Ulster as for their neighbours in the rest of Ireland. Some aristocratic families, like the Londonderrys and the Rossmores, kept substantial thoroughbred stables for the purpose of breeding and racing, but these establishments were rare within Ulster: more characteristic was the maintenance of a smaller stable of horses for private use, either for hunting, riding, and transport, or as farm and work horses. Despite this, the stables of the estates of Ulster were not insignificant: at Caledon and at Baronscourt the stable generally housed between fifteen and twenty mounts throughout this period, although the attitudes to the horses varied between houses.⁹⁴ At Caledon, a small scale breeding programme in the 1870s and 1880s encouraged a more business-like attitude to the stables: while those horses used by the family for pleasure were treated very much as pets, they were also viewed in terms of their value.⁹⁵ This became increasingly true as the 4th earl worked toward the increase of the stable in the 1890s.⁹⁶ After the death of the earl the programme of breeding was abandoned, and the attitude to the horses seems to have changed accordingly: at both Caledon and Baronscourt, by the 1910s the records demonstrate that while the monetary value of the horses was still recognised, the horses used by the family were seen as pets, with the records showing their names, rather than their breeding records. The working horses were simply recorded as mouths to feed.⁹⁷

The regional sporting differences of the north of Ireland are also manifested in the breeding and horse racing record of these families: while some Ulster peers did pursue breeding programmes on their estates in Ulster, the most successful thoroughbred stable from within these families was that of the Londonderrys, which was actually based away from Ulster, at their Durham estate of Wynyard Park. The record of these elite families demonstrates, then, that while the horse remained an intrinsic part of aristocratic life, and a crucial symbol of power for these families, the north of Ireland was not, in fact, horse country. Despite the fact that other pursuits, such as shooting and water sports, were better

⁹⁴ PRONI, Abercorn Papers, D/623/C/12/74. Book of Baronscourt livestock, 1918

⁹⁵ PRONI, Caledon Papers, D/2433/A/8/9. Stock Book for Caledon Farm, 1873-1884

⁹⁶ PRONI, Caledon Papers, D/2433/A/8/10. Stock Book for Caledon Farm, 1885-1895

⁹⁷ PRONI, Caledon Papers, D/2433/A/8/13. Stock Book for Caledon Farm, 1907-1917; PRONI, Abercorn Papers, D/623/C/12/74. Baronscourt Register of Horses, and Cattle (Shorthorn and Aberdeen Angus), 1918

suited to the ecology of the Ulster estate, these families continued their pursuit of horse breeding, fox-hunting, and horse-racing, sometimes at home, but more often away from their Ulster homes. This may be evidence of the requirement of these pursuits to participate within the wider, collective atmosphere of the landed classes of the United Kingdom, and of the priority placed by these families on their integration within this community. The pursuit of equestrian sports was a social and cultural necessity for these families, intentionally pursued even at the cost of other activities.⁹⁸

Horse racing, and particularly the associated pastimes of breeding and race-course gambling, has additionally been seen as a form of conspicuous consumption, and therefore as an important symbol of the financial power of the elite. The role of the horse as a status symbol for the Anglo-Irish has already been recognised, and Vamplew sees horse racing as the natural product of this.⁹⁹ This cache continued to increase in the last years of the nineteenth and first years of the twentieth centuries, particularly due to the highly publicised involvement of the Prince of Wales in the sport: the increased status of horse racing offered promises of increased returns in terms of publicity, social power, and cultural relevance.¹⁰⁰ The symbolic and actual ties between ownership and high society were largely based around the expense required to keep racers in top condition, and as the nineteenth century progressed into the twentieth, costs rose substantially from £300 annually in the 1870s, to up to £500 by the inter-war years.¹⁰¹ These statistics are supported by the stable records of Lord Rossmore, as well as by his eventual decision to sell much of his racing stock in order to cover the manifold other costs of running an estate.¹⁰²

As was frequently attested by thoroughbred breeders, racing was the only way to ensure the quality of a particular horse, and while the breeders were primarily interested in testing this quality for the purposes of forming advantageous lineages, the elite were

⁹⁸ Carr, in *English Fox Hunting*, notes that fox-hunting was a distraction from the patronage of the arts in Britain after the 1830s (p.132), but this was equally true among some families within this study in the case of horse-breeding and racing, yachting, and other sports. In a time of increased financial pressures, investment in architecture, art, and literature could, and sometimes was, sacrificed to support the contemporarily more social sporting and entertainment calendars of these families.

⁹⁹ Wray Vamplew, *The Turf: A Social and Economic History of Horse Racing* (London, 1976), p.17

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, p.178

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, p.180

¹⁰² For information on the finances of Rossmore's stable, see PRONI, Rossmore Papers, T/2929/18 & 19, and T/2929/29, especially numbers: T/2929/18/5, 1884; T/2929/19/1, 38, January 1884; T/2929/19/7, 3 September 1884; T/2929/29/585-88, March to October 1884

additionally motivated by a desire to display the excellence of their horses. Merely observing at the races was rarely adequate for true enthusiasts like Lord Rossmore, and for men like this, the jump from ownership into breeding was effortless, if expensive.¹⁰³ The question of genetic inheritance and bloodlines was one that was felt as particularly relevant within aristocratic circles, but other factors, such as the requirement of the necessary talent and funding, also attracted some of the wealthiest racing enthusiasts to breeding.

For the majority of the British and Irish aristocracy during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, horse racing epitomised this conjunction of social and sporting occasions. While the rise of facilitated transport to the races meant that the role of some courses as social destinations declined, racing events like Epsom, Goodwood, and especially Ascot retained their elevated position in the social calendar well into the twentieth century. It was only at these courses that ladies were regularly seen before the 1890s, but at races like Ascot, being seen was key, as was clearly expressed by the marchioness of Dufferin in a letter to her daughter, Lady Hermione Blackwood.¹⁰⁴ As the century turned, however, the newly enclosed courses began to develop a collective atmosphere that encouraged female spectators, particularly in private racing clubs, where a system was in place so that the carefully selected male members of the club were allowed a certain number of ladies' passes which enabled them to bring guests into the restricted club area. It was here that ladies and gentlemen alike could watch the races without the risk of a forced interaction with social inferiors,¹⁰⁵ and where by mixing exclusively with one another, these peers could rehabilitate their sense of collective community. Like fox-hunting, and despite the interest felt in the sport by a range of socio-economic classes, the purpose of horse-racing was to encourage and foster exclusivity and the support of the elite community, not encourage democratisation and the integration of a wider social range within this society.

Ascot was one of the events where the majority of the members of Society would be present, and where forging connections among the elite was an annual pursuit. The Annesleys attended Ascot yearly, and like the marchioness of Dufferin and Lady Hermione Blackwood, the women recognised the importance of the appropriate clothing for the occasion: semi-

¹⁰³ Vamplew, *The Turf*, pp.179,190

¹⁰⁴ PRONI, Dufferin Papers, D/1231/M/2/9. Harriot, marchioness of Dufferin and Ava to Lady Hermione Blackwood, n.d.

¹⁰⁵ Vamplew, *The Turf*, p.39

formal wear in light colours was *de rigueur* at Ascot and at similar summer events in the 1890s.¹⁰⁶ A photograph shows Mabel, countess Annesley, at Ascot, getting into her closed carriage dressed in a floor-length, bustled white frock covered with intricate lace ruffles, her male escorts dressed in sombre black.¹⁰⁷ These sorts of combined sporting and social events were an important part of the Season, mixing as they did the various interests of the upper classes, and integrating the metropolitan aspects of the Season with the predominantly rurally-based existence of the aristocracy during the rest of the year. Horse-racing held an important place in Dublin, as well, and in August of each year a sort of mini-Season sprang up around the Royal Dublin Society's Horse Show, including dances and dinners at the Viceregal Lodge at Phoenix Park, and an official opening ball at the Royal Dublin Society's headquarters on Kildare Street.¹⁰⁸ These races, while regularly attended by the aristocracy of Ulster whether in Dublin or in Britain, were not generally occasions at which members of these families played a major part: as was the case with the rest of the horse-breeding and racing scene, and as was almost entirely true of the fox hunting society in Ireland and England, Ulster's elite only played a secondary part in these pursuits, acting as spectators at the big races and nabbing once-great trainers to run their stables.¹⁰⁹

The role of Ascot, Goodwood, and the other elite events on the annual racing schedule, as satellite fixtures of the London Season, and the requirements of invitations by members of the Jockey Club to enter the enclosures rendered the social purpose of the race-course clear for the elite: the goal of these events was to further solidify the existing elite community and to gradually reintroduce pre-selected new elements within the existing fabric of Society. To this end, the aristocracy of Ulster remained involved with the pursuits of horse-racing and horse-breeding, either as spectators, or in the case of the Londonderrys, by engaging in their own breeding programmes from their British estates. Dominic Lieven has suggested that

¹⁰⁶ PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/M/2/9. Harriot, Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava to Lady Hermione Blackwood, n.d.

¹⁰⁷ PRONI, Annesley Papers, T/3774/9. Photo album of the Annesley family, c. 1881

¹⁰⁸ Bence-Jones, *Twilight of the Ascendancy*, p.53

¹⁰⁹ Captain James Machell, who worked first for Henry, 1st viscount Chaplin (father of Edith, marchioness of Londonderry) in the 1860s, ran the stables at Rossmore Park in the 1880s (PRONI, Rossmore Papers, T/2929/18/5, 1884). Elsewhere there existed a community of racing trainers and grooms within the circle of the Ulster aristocracy, including Alfred Sydney, a talented enough groom and stable-manager for Lord Rossmore to use financial means to encourage him to move his employment from Lord Dufferin's stables at Clondeboy to those at Rossmore Park (PRONI, Rossmore Papers, T/2929/19/12, 20 May 1885). Rossmore also held connections with the staff and stock at Dawson's Grove, in the form of *The Fairy Queen* and her owner, Dartrey staff groom Richard Gray. (PRONI, Rossmore Papers, T/2929/18/1, n.d.)

within this context the aristocracy was offered a new opportunity for use within the modern United Kingdom:

The sight of the nobleman leading his winning horse into the enclosure at the Derby amidst the crowd's plaudits could be seen, according to taste, as a new role and legitimacy for aristocracy in the modern age, or alternatively as the marginalisation, trivialisation, and vulgarisation of what had been a ruling class.¹¹⁰

Some of the aristocrats of Ulster made an effort to embrace this opportunity: the interest in horse breeding among the wealthiest of these families experienced an upsurge in the first two decades of the twentieth century. In the years leading up to the Great War, both the Londonderrys and the Enniskillens were engaging in a profit-based breeding programme within their stables. Yet, the only successful breeding programme was, as has been mentioned, at the Londonderry stud in county Durham.¹¹¹ Throughout this period, in years when re-investment in the estate was financially feasible, the aristocrats of Ulster tried to introduce breeding programmes into their estates, but to limited success. Instead, the horse remained both functional and a symbol for these families: as a means to facilitate transport and estate work, they held an important physical place on the estate, and as a sources of personal and sporting pleasure, they filled the stables of the elite. However, their cultural place was not the same in Ulster as it was elsewhere in Ireland, and this was reflected in the overall culture of landed leisure in Ulster: as a symbol, the yacht, not the horse, was the emblem of Ulster's aristocracy.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the estate remained the primary location for aristocratic social life. The ownership and possession of land remained psychologically and practically extremely important for the aristocratic families of Ulster, and the pursuits through which they interacted with their estates remained some of the highest priorities for the landed classes. The primary leisure occupations of the aristocracy were those that further linked them with the estate around them and demonstrated their symbolic and actual connection to the land. For the aristocracy of the north of Ireland, the regional differences were most clearly manifested in their sporting patterns. During this time these families began to develop their own social climate, and this was exhibited in their

¹¹⁰ Dominic Lieven, *The Aristocracy in Europe, 1815-1914* (Basingstoke, 1992), p.152

¹¹¹ In 1912, there were 14 foals at Florence Court, and in the same year the Enniskillens invested in their own stallion, who was used both to breed with the brood mares on site, and who was also offered for stud at a fee to other stables.

leisure patterns. While the elite families of the north of Ireland still engaged with the wider Irish and British landed classes as their primary society—after all, a United Kingdom was the arena in which they married, had been educated, and looked to as a social and cultural Mecca—at the same time, aristocrats in the north of Ireland were additionally making an effort to emphasise the distinctiveness of their own locality, gradually integrating a greater regional identity into their activities. In this way, the central sporting activities pursued on their estates, such as water sports and hare-coursing, provided a distinctive means to rehabilitate their elite community during a time when these coteries were increasingly threatened. The wider elite achieved this by engaging in sports which required enormous investments of time and money, and/or which necessitated the ownership of large tracts of lands on which to pursue quarry, thereby assuring the central place of the landed, leisured class within these activities. At the same time, the peers of the north of Ireland additionally integrated newer forms of leisure into their lives, helping them to engage both with their own society and with the currents of rural and international leisure.

At the same time, the aristocracy was able to attract new attention to their traditional pursuits, integrating into their communities the newly powerful artistic and literary elite through their attractively picturesque and nostalgic society on the shore of Lough Erne. Some efforts made by Ulster's aristocracy to retain cultural relevance of social supremacy failed: despite the programmes of the earls of Enniskillen and Lord Rossmore, the north of Ireland never became a centre of thoroughbred racing or breeding, while the Londonderry stud at Wynyard Park, county Durham, flourished. The political, geographic, and technological climate of twentieth century game hunting in Ulster worked against the peers of this region, rendering Ulster's large estates undesirable as weekend or holiday shooting lets, a failure which was partly aggravated by the more limited investment and management plans of Ulster's landowners. However, in their interaction with the yachting and sailing world both within the region and internationally, Ulster's elite secured their place within the most influential corners of the sporting world, and through the society and leisure on offer around Ulster's Down coast and on Lough Erne, they were able to draw the politically powerful and socially important members of Irish and British society to their own estates, securing the place of Ulster as a sporting, and therefore entertaining, centre within aristocratic life.

SIX

ART COLLECTIONS AS SYMBOLS AND COMMODITIES IN THE HOMES OF ULSTER'S ARISTOCRACY

By the late nineteenth century, the collections of the aristocracy in the north of Ireland ranged widely from repositories of colonial artefacts to collections of fossils to displays of Renaissance art.¹ Collections of art in particular became emblematic of the interaction of the aristocracy with the world of aesthetics, and the great art collections of Britain and Ireland's country homes became totems of aristocratic worth and (in Pierre Bourdieu's terms) 'distinction'.² For the aristocracy in the north of Ireland, collections were a symbol of wealth and of understanding. From the seventeenth century onwards, these collections, especially those of paintings, were seen as a route to civility and virtue, key in the development of the manners and intellect of a gentleman.³ The ways in which the elite collections of the aristocracy were managed during this period demonstrates clearly those principles which directed the lives of the aristocracy in the north of Ireland during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and which are the central concerns of this thesis. Namely, as in much of their cultural interactions, the role of art and elite collections in aristocratic life was reflective of their abilities to adapt, their dedication to an ideal of the elite community, and to the preservation of a historicised idea of tradition. Within this chapter, these themes will form the central concern of the analysis. The chapter will begin by looking at the contexts of

¹ The collections of the elite in the north of Ireland ranged from repositories of paintings and engravings in many of these homes, to the collection of curiosities and international mementoes displayed in the great hall at Clondeboyne, to the enormous group of almost 10,000 fossilised specimens housed at Florence Court until the 1880s. PRONI, Introduction to the Enniskillen Papers, p.25

² Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Translated by Richard Nice (London, 1984)

³ Toby Barnard, *Making the Grand Figure: Lives and Possessions in Ireland, 1641-1770* (New Haven, 2004), p.151

aristocratic ‘taste’ during this period: how early exposure to what was collectively judged as culturally significant helped the aristocrat to develop an understanding of what constituted value within the artistic world of the upper-classes, and how these principles of value were expressed within the country houses of the north of Ireland.

The chapter will then look at the ways in which collections of art were used as commodities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This chapter is largely concerned with paintings, rather than other forms of art: while other media, such as sculpture, engravings, wall-hangings, and the decorative arts, made up a part of the collection as a whole, in numbers these forms of representations were dwarfed by the sheer volume of painted materials hung on the walls of the aristocratic houses. Within the context of the art market, painting dominated the late nineteenth and early twentieth century visual arts, as it does to this day.⁴ The value, both financial and emotional, of paintings gave them a place above other works within the elite home. In part, this value was due to the important role paintings played as tools for representing individual and collective identity within landed society. The final section of this chapter will look at the role portraiture played within the elite collection, and especially at how changes in the role artists played within British and Irish society altered the relationship between patron, sitter, and artist. The ways in which the aristocracy used portraiture is indicative of their ability to adapt to the changes of the twentieth century more generally, demonstrating that in the face of political and economic challenges, the elite embraced change and adjusted their position within their cultural world.

Overwhelmingly, the nature of the patronage and involvement in the art world of these families during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was determined by the central focus of the art industry on London. From the seventeenth century, Dublin was seen as inferior to London as a location for artists (and London was in turn seen as inferior to the Continent), and this was a concern of patrons, who accordingly transferred their own interaction with the arts to the imperial capital.⁵ As with their marriage networks, educational patterns, and social direction, in their artistic patronage, the aristocracy of the north of Ireland was wedded to an idea of Ireland as a part of the United Kingdom, not as a cultural world within itself.

⁴ Peter Watson, *From Manet to Manhattan: The Rise of the Modern Art Market* (London, 1993), p.xvi

⁵ Barnard, *Making the Grand Figure*, p.153

Young men and women brought up among the treasures of the United Kingdom's great country houses were tutored in the appreciation of their material and environmental heritage. Pierre Bourdieu has argued that cultural and aesthetic taste, as reflected in artistic and literary preferences, depends primarily on the educational and socio-economic background of the viewer.⁶ This was certainly a factor in the formation of aristocratic taste in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: aristocratic children began their education in art appreciation and ancestry at birth, and this continued throughout their youths in the country house. Primarily, this early training in the characteristics of elite taste was passive, and children in the country home absorbed their understanding of the principles and requirements of art and culture through their experiences with the collections that were housed in their homes. Within their formal schooling, artistic appreciation formed a limited part of the curriculum for young women, and had almost no place in the established academic schedule of the public school.⁷ Yet within the rarefied halls of Eton and Harrow, the young men of the aristocracy experienced at least part of their lives within the established cultural terms: pre-Raphaelite-inspired trophies and the chivalric works of Tennyson emboldened young men on the sports field; within chapel the artistic and musical trends of the day were reflected in the stained glass and echoed in the songs of the choir; while at Eton portraits of the most successful former pupils lined the walls, deliberately laying out the legacy which pupils were expected to emulate.⁸ Young women were continually exposed to the artistic collections in their own homes, and in the houses of other elite families, while many were actually tutored in artistic media such as watercolours as a part of their formal education.

This is itself reflective of the cultural emphasis at work in the aristocratic upbringing: Bourdieu has asserted that it is a particular feature of upper- and select middle-class educational establishments that children are exposed to the aesthetic training that will render them capable of instinctual cultural judgment and understanding.⁹ The shared sense of a concept of aesthetic value among the landed classes was one of many means by which the aristocracy supported and perpetuated their shared cultural community. At Castle Leslie,

⁶ Kenneth McConkey, *Memory and Desire* (Aldershot, 2002), p.22; Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*, pp.87,133

⁷ Rupert Wilkinson, *The Prefects: British Leadership and the Public School Tradition* (London, 1964), p.67.

⁸ Wilkinson, *The Prefects*, p.100; Girouard, *The Return To Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven, 1981), pp.7,175; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven and London, 1992), p.168

⁹ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p.133

which was filled with a collection of Italian and pre-Raphaelite art, the dining room held family portraits. This material record of centuries of family taste and achievement became as much a daily part of the lives of the Leslie children, who lunched in the dining room, as for their elders, who dined twice daily under the gaze of their antecedents.¹⁰ Bourdieu views the effect of the daily exposure of the upper classes to the more established realms of culture in what he refers to as the ‘ease or cultivated naturalness’ demonstrated by the elite when faced with cultural artifacts with which they are not familiar, but which demonstrate aesthetic patterns that have been made familiar through exposure and education.¹¹ Children raised in aristocratic British and Irish families during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were continually exposed to what their parents and grandparents had decided (and been taught) was aesthetically valuable, and because of this education, they were able to further these patterns of judgment and cultural control within their own lives.

An important aspect of this training was the creation in the minds of both family members and their visitors of the presence of a long line of ancestors within the elite home. This was most clearly articulated in the portrait collections housed in every landed home. At Castle Leslie, portraits of the family were often grouped together, creating a united front of ancestral guardians in two dimensions. Among the families considered in this study, this weight of expectation seems to be particularly apparent in the Londonderry family, and is unmistakably represented in the interior of Londonderry House, Park Lane, which is recreated in H. Montgomery Hyde’s *Londonderry House and its Pictures*. In the 1930s the house provided a testament to the emphasis that was still placed by the family on their illustrious early nineteenth-century ancestors, particularly the 2nd and 3rd marquesses of Londonderry.¹² The impression of the 3rd marquess that lingered in Londonderry House well into the twentieth century was that of a collector: many of the finest works and a number of the interior design schemes in the house date from his tenure.

The collections formed in the great houses of Ulster by the end of the nineteenth century display an incredible regularity: formed at different times, by different members of elite, with various levels of economic weight and social aspiration, the painted collections of

¹⁰ Leslie, *The Gilt and the Gingerbread* (London, 1981), pp.15, 36

¹¹ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p.139

¹² The 2nd marquess of Londonderry is traditionally referred to as Viscount Castlereagh, his title while he was active in politics during the Napoleonic Wars, and will be referred to as such throughout this work. The 3rd marquess was his half-brother, and inherited the Londonderry title and properties at his death.

the aristocracy of Ulster nevertheless exhibit a number of marked artistic themes that make it clear that these were repositories of a collective, landed taste, not indicators of the aesthetic preferences of any individual or family. In part, this was because the expression of collective taste, and therefore the ability to understand that taste, was a part of the display of the artistic collection. Linda Colley has recognised that the rarity of many of the works preferred by the landed elite—whether paintings by Old Masters, Dutch tapestries, or Asian vases—guaranteed the status of these items within the elite home, offering a vision of cosmopolitanism desired by the upper classes.¹³ However, these pieces were more than rare: they were a part of the symbology of aristocratic aesthetics, and demonstrated that the possessor of these pieces not only had the wealth to afford them, but had the necessary breeding and education with which to appreciate them.

In general, the collections at most of these aristocratic houses seem to have been built along similar principles, and were clearly reflective of this by the early twentieth century. Certain artists were obviously popular with the elite families of Ulster: seascapes by Vernet, family portraits by Kaufman, Reynolds, Gainsborough, Lawrence, Lely, and Jervas, and provincial scenes and still lifes by the Dutch and Flemish masters were important parts of the aristocratic collection. Many families held one or more very fine paintings by an artist classed then, as now, as an ‘Old Master’: an exceptionally vague term used to refer to master artists working between the fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries, but including the work of such diverse painters as Raphael and Goya. The recurrence of the same artists within the collections at different homes emphasises the interest of the elite families in expressing not only their impeccable aesthetic taste within the realm of accepted aristocratic aesthetics, but also their recognition of the value these works had as established components of the elite home.

The themes evident in country house art from the mid-nineteenth century would later influence the creation of the national taste in the establishment of the National Gallery of Ireland, which was filled by subsequent directors with art both inspired by the tastes of Ireland’s landed classes, and with pieces that were actually purchased from, or donated by, these figures in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁴ Throughout the province,

¹³ Colley, *Britons*, p.166

¹⁴ Cyril Barrett and Jeanne Sheehy, “Visual arts and society, 1900-21” in *A New History of Ireland VI* (ed. W.E. Vaughan) (Oxford, 1996), p.484

the same national schools were represented within the homes of the elite. First among the collections of the elite were the Old Masters, primarily Italian, but also Spanish and Flemish, a preference which again found its way into the collective taste of the Irish nation and wider British fashion for European painting from the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁵

More plentiful within the homes of Ulster's aristocrats than Spanish or Italian Masters, however, were paintings by Dutch artists of the Golden Age. The primary emphasis in the collection at Crom Castle was on seventeenth-century Dutch work, including not only paintings by such masters as Claes Nicholas Berchem and Pieter de Hooch, but also a set of six Flemish tapestries by the Teuiers family, dating from about 1640.¹⁶ This interest in northern European art was shared by the family at Dawson's Grove and by aristocratic contemporaries across the north of Ireland. Toby Barnard has seen this taste as rooted in the increased level of travel of the ancestors of Ireland's Protestant elite to the Netherlands and other northern Protestant countries during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹⁷ Tastes were influenced by later social currents, as well, as has been recognised by Linda Colley, who associates a rise in the popularity of British art, fashions, and furnishings with the burgeoning patriotism of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This may have been reflected in the collections of the Dartreys at Dawson's Grove, especially after the 1920s, when paintings of the Dutch and Flemish schools were sold, while many of the works by English artists were spared. While there may have been some national preference reflected in this sale, this should be assigned very cautiously: it is also likely that the Dartrey family recognised that the works of the northern painters would fetch higher prices at auction.

However, during the first twenty years of the twentieth century, the Dartreys were unusual in actually adding significantly to their collection, amassing a respectable collection of watercolours, painted both by amateurs from within their extended family (the collection included a few landscape paintings by relatives of the earls of Ilchester, cousins of the Dartreys) and by more established professional artists. In both the choice of artists and of the

¹⁵ Cyril Barrett and Jeanne Sheehy, "Visual arts and society, 1850-1900" in *A New History of Ireland VI* (ed. W.E. Vaughan) (Oxford, 1996), p.438

¹⁶ PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1939/27/12. Catalogue of the Pictures and Miniatures at Crom Castle by Curwen & Co., Dublin, Printers, 1910; Erne Papers, D/1939/27/26. A box containing inventories, etc., of Crom Castle, c. 1907; Erne Papers, D/1939/27/12. A description of six tapestries in the possession of the Erne family, c. 1910.

¹⁷ Toby Barnard, *Making the Grand Figure: Lives and Possessions in Ireland, 1641-1770* (New Haven, 2004), p.312

scenes depicted, these watercolours reflect the larger emphasis within the Dartrey collection on British work: painters like Johann Zoffany, Francis Coates, and William Hogarth are well-represented within a collection that also contained luminaries such as El Greco and Peter Paul Rubens.

In this, however, the Dartreys were rare: by the 1870s, social and economic pressures left the majority of the aristocracy increasingly less able to collect at the level demonstrated by their ancestors. The erosion of the agricultural and inherited economy threatened the aristocracy in a very real sense, and in order to support their lifestyle, the carefully constructed early nineteenth-century collection was increasingly sold to become a part of the museum collection, the industrialist's cabinet of curiosities, or the American finance baron's private art gallery.¹⁸ The failure of the landed incomes of the aristocracy was part of what enabled the growth in the art market of the late nineteenth century, and as the desire for works which had formerly been ensconced in private country homes increased, so the aristocratic owners saw the sale of their cultural heritage as a possible source of fiscal support in a time of economic crisis.

In general terms, the aristocracy of the north of Ireland added very few new pieces to their artistic collections after the 1870s, excepting, of course, the periodic additions of portraiture, which were central in assuring a lasting material manifestation of the family lineage. During this period the elite concentrated on the preservation, not the expansion, of the family collections. The act of adding to these collections was a part of the interaction between the past, present, and future, and one of the ways in which the elite were able to make their own mark on homes which were collective, rather than individual, spaces. Most aristocrats, therefore, acted as very cautious collectors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

This cautiousness was, however, the result of a number of factors, and the examination of these forces should not be limited to the precarious financial climate or the existing fabric of their family's holdings. The limitations of financial burdens must be questioned especially for those families whose incomes were not primarily landed by the end of the nineteenth century. Both the Londonderrys (who were super wealthy, and extracted their income from coal mines in the north of England) and the Kilmoreys (who were very well-off, and who had

¹⁸ McConkey, *Memory and Desire*, pp.24,99

a particularly high income in the 1880s and 1890s due to theatre rentals in the West End) fall into this category, and not entirely coincidentally made up part of the circle of peers who surrounded the Prince of Wales in the last years of the nineteenth century. Despite their substantial incomes, neither the Londonderrys nor the Kilmoreys invested significantly in the embellishment of their family collections in the mould of their predecessors. It may be the case that there were actually social, rather than financial, pressures that discouraged spending on artistic works: the priority within the Prince of Wales' circle was sporting, rather than aesthetic, pursuits, and this was reflected in the spending patterns of these families, who alternately poured money into race horses and entertainment.

The decision to dismantle the family collections was also not taken lightly. Exposed to their cultural value throughout their lives, the aristocracy of Ulster was abundantly aware that the collections in their possession had been assembled to become a part of the aristocratic inheritance. Those aristocrats who were unable to keep the collections intact could only do so with the knowledge that they had failed to live up to familial and ancestral expectation. While the nineteenth century sale of some or all of the artistic or literary collections in their homes offered the aristocrats of the north of Ireland the chance to profit in very real terms from the successes and investments of their Ascendancy forebears, they were also very aware of the symbolic sacrifices that the sale of eighteenth and early nineteenth century collections would entail.

Although a detailed analysis of the complex system of international exchange and sales in the art world is not within the scope of this work, a general outline of the art market between 1870 and 1925 can be loosely constructed and helps to illuminate the artistic context in which these families operated. However, within the fluctuating market, the values of certain styles, periods, and even certain artists changed in ways that were not always reflective of the greater trends, influencing the monetary value of the works bought and sold by aristocratic collectors in the north of Ireland. Each collection was altered at least in part during this period, highlighting not only the artistic biases and interests of each particular family, but also revealing that from time to time the preservation of the family collection required the sacrifice of some exceptional or valuable works to support and retain the remainder.

In general, 1870 is seen as a low point in the sales of pictures in London and throughout Britain. Gerald Reitlinger has indicated a lengthy stagnation in the market for

paintings from the 1830s to the 1870s, and this is especially reflected in the market for Old Master paintings, which hit their lowest point at the end of this long period of value depression, despite a contemporaneous resurgence in Irish interest in art.¹⁹ The recovery of this market was further hampered by the actual limitations of the traditions of sale: both in the sale of art within Britain and in the export market before the 1880s, it was unlikely that works from aristocratic collections would find their way to the auction houses of London. More frequently, private sales were negotiated, thereby removing some of the public market forces from this exchange.²⁰ According to Peter Watson, the modern art market did not really come into existence until the 1880s, reflecting both the collective attitude to art sales at this time, and the lack of necessity for many aristocratic collectors during the third quarter of the nineteenth century.²¹

During this period, a few families were actually still building their collections, and the depressed market for artistic treasures contributed to this. In the 1870s the Leslies amassed a number of works by the Italian masters, which were complemented by the works created by Sir John Leslie in the pre-Raphaelite style.²² For the Leslies, as the newly-entitled head of a landed family gaining gradual social prominence, these works were not only complementary to his own aesthetic tastes, but additionally were a good investment. In the 1860s and 1870s works by late medieval Italian painters were ‘an inexpensive scholar’s taste,’ and Italian Primitives remained inexpensive through the nineteenth century, only gaining in value in the years preceding the Great War.²³ During this time, it was still possible for families like the Leslies to take advantage of this, although the date of the formation of their collection, and the pieces included within it, shows their place within the hierarchy of Ulster’s elite. The establishment of the family within the titled elite of the north of Ireland required the outlay of some of their fortune on a collection with which they could fill their new home at Castle Leslie, but the newness of the family’s title, and of the collection itself, is reflected in its style. Unlike the other country homes of the region, where aristocratic ‘taste’ is demonstrated in a collection built gradually and along fairly generic stylistic lines, Castle Leslie’s artworks

¹⁹ Gerald Reitlinger, *The Economics of Taste: The Rise and Fall of Picture Prices, 1760-1960* (London, 1961), pp.109,130; Cyril Barrett and Jeanne Sheehy, “Visual arts and society, 1850-1900” in *A New History of Ireland VI* (ed. W.E. Vaughan) (Oxford, 1996), p.439

²⁰ Reitlinger, *The Economics of Taste*, pp.175-7

²¹ Watson, *From Manet to Manhattan*, p.xvii

²² Leslie, *The Gilt and the Gingerbread*, p.15

²³ Reitlinger, *The Economics of Taste*, p.127

primarily demonstrate the taste of John Leslie, 1st Baronet, and his passion for Italian art of the *quattrocento*. In their collection, the Leslies seem to be the exception that proves the rule of the consistency of aristocratic taste in the late nineteenth century.

During the 1880s both the solvency of the landed classes, and accordingly the market for art sales in Britain, began to change. This was especially true after the Marlborough sales of 1884-6, which stimulated both an upturn in the market for Old Masters, and encouraged the use of public sale rooms for aristocratic collections.²⁴ According to Reitlinger, the market during this period for native British art remained depressed, primarily as it was not yet driven by the interest of the wealthiest American collectors, whose tastes in the 1880s and 1890s were generally toward modern French works.²⁵ However, Watson has included a number of British artists (especially of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries) among the 'stars of the 1880s', including Landseer, Turner, and Gainsborough.²⁶ Along with those stalwarts of the country house, such as Rubens, Cuyp, Greuze, and Watteau, and Old Masters such as Leonardo, Botticelli, and Velasquez, these British painters rounded out a group that in the 1880s could claim prices of more than £1,500 for a painting. A few modern artists, such as Millet, Messonier, and the British Millais, also fell into this group.

The fortunes of less profitable artists still reflected the fashions of the time, and the interest of buyers increased through the 1880s and into the early 1890s in the Dutch and Flemish paintings that formed a large part of the elite collection, and in contemporary and early nineteenth century English works. Painters like Holbein, Memling, Vermeer, Brueghel, and van Eyck were increasingly popular, though not at the level of other northern masters such as Rubens and Cuyp. British painters, like the previously-mentioned triumvirate of Landseer, Turner, and Gainsborough, were joined by other Golden Age artists as the decade progressed, and the work of Reynolds, Romney, Raeburn, and Constable gained popularity.²⁷

During the early 1890s, however, the market for the works of both native contemporary painters and for Old Masters suffered a depression within Britain, and for the first time a significant number of these types of paintings from British collections were sold to collectors

²⁴ *ibid.*, p.108

²⁵ *ibid.*, p.177

²⁶ Watson, *From Manet to Manhattan*, p.101

²⁷ *ibid.*, p.101

and museums in the United States and in Germany.²⁸ The growing interest of American buyers in the works of early nineteenth century painters such as Romney and Lawrence stimulated the market for the treasures of Britain's country homes, and encouraged sales.²⁹ However, these elite families did not only sell these paintings, they very occasionally also purchased them: in 1895 the earl of Erne indulged in the mania for Golden Age painting and purchased a portrait of a maternal relative by George Romney at Christie's.³⁰ For those members of the aristocracy experiencing a downturn in their incomes due to decreased holdings in the wake of successive Land Acts, this interest in the collections of their forebears presented a new opportunity for recouping their losses, while for others, such as Erne, land sales may have offered the means for a new opportunity of investment. While the sacrifices of aspects of the elite collection were not without their pitfalls, both emotional and market-based, they did offer some solution to the changing economics of landownership: while the downturn in rental incomes was long-term, art sales brought immediate cash to recompense for the reduction in rents that were the inevitable result of both land sales and the inability to effectively raise rents after the 1860s.

During the last years of the nineteenth century, the British art market experienced a surge of interest in the works of the principal artists of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and the fascination with these paintings by new collectors (primarily industrialists and foreign investors) was fed by the collapse of the fortunes of the landowners.³¹ The interest in the eighteenth century coloured the cultural decisions of the elite across the board, influencing not only tastes in art, but also fashion, entertainment, and interior design.³² The representatives of new money had a desire to express their legitimacy through the luxurious works created during Britain's economic and artistic peak, and during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries they had access to these pieces in unprecedented numbers. However, this market was not only dictated by what wealthy buyers were interested in purchasing. Because of the demand in the market for these types of paintings, when families

²⁸ Reitlinger, *The Economics of Taste*, pp.173,197-198

²⁹ *ibid.*, p.189

³⁰ PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1939/27/12. Catalogue of the Pictures and Miniatures at Crom Castle by Curwen & Co., Dublin, Printers, 1910

³¹ McConkey, *Memory and Desire*, p.21

³² Margaret Maynard, "'A Dream of Fair Women': Revival Dress and the Formation of Late Victorian Images of Femininity', in Peter McNeil (ed.), *Fashion: Critical and Primary Sources, Volume 3: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 2009), p.379

from the north of Ireland sold off works in order to make ends meet in the early twentieth century, works by eighteenth-century artists joined pieces from Old Masters in being removed from the aristocratic collections.

Reitlinger has theorised that the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century painters became widely sought after on the impetus of the sellers, not the buyers: ‘While a man does not normally sell his mother’s portrait or his grandmother’s, he has no qualms about his great-grandmother. For this reason, the cult of Reynolds and Gainsborough started earlier than the cult of Hoppner, Raeburn, Beechey, and Lawrence.’³³ By 1900, George Romney held the particular interest of Britain and Ireland’s elite.³⁴ In recognising the power of the seller, as well as the buyer, within the art market of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is easier to view the sale of certain items from the aristocratic collections as a choice, with alternatives, rather than a last resort forced on the beleaguered aristocracy of the north of Ireland.

The sorts of pieces that were most often sold by the elite families of Ulster during the early twentieth century are those that had associations with the zenith of British portraiture in the seventeenth through early nineteenth centuries, thereby responding to the interest of American buyers in this market after the 1890s. Watson attributes the rise of what he has referred to as ‘one of the most venal periods in the art market’ to both conditions in the United States and in Italy, and in the rise of art historical scholarship.³⁵ For the aristocracy of the north of Ireland, this market offered a greater return for their sales than ever before: the Erne family at Crom chose to disperse a few of their pieces in the years just before 1910.³⁶ In 1908 and 1909 the Earl of Erne sold a number of significant works from the family collection, including a neo-Classical landscape by Nicholas Poussin, and portraits by Charles Jervas and Angelica Kaufman. Portraiture by followers of the seventeenth and eighteenth-century luminaries was also popular, although it fetched a lower price: at the same time the

³³ Reitlinger, *The Economics of Taste*, p.183

³⁴ Maynard, “‘A Dream of Fair Women’”, p.381

³⁵ Watson, *From Manet to Manhattan*, p.166

³⁶ PRONI holds two sets of inventories made in the early twentieth century at Crom Castle and at Dartrey House. See PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1939/27/12. Catalogue of the Pictures and Miniatures at Crom Castle by Curwen & Co., Dublin, Printers, 1910; Erne Papers, D/1939/27/26. A box containing inventories, etc., of Crom Castle, c. 1907. Dartrey Papers, D/3053/8/26/1-12. List of Oil Paintings of the Earl of Dartrey, deceased, made for Bennett and Son, Ltd., by Wm. Martin and Son, Solicitors, 60 Dawson Street, Dublin and Monaghan. Copy of a list of oil paintings of the Earl of Dartrey made in 1920. Dartrey Papers, D/3053/8/26/4. Auction catalogue of the contents of Dartrey Castle for Jackson Stops and McCabe, 1937

Erne Collection was also divested of a double portrait by a follower of Sir Joshua Reynolds and a depiction of a man in armour by the school of Sir Peter Lely.³⁷

The Ernes certainly received some benefit from the gradual rise in prices during the 1900s, although they would have received a greater profit after 1910. The years that bracketed the Great War were to become the most profitable sale years during the period, when paintings by the most sought after artists of the Renaissance easily topped £10,000.³⁸ In 1912 the already booming market was further stimulated by the sale in Paris of the collection of the noted *couturier* Doucet,³⁹ while in the following year interest in Gainsborough, Reynolds, and the Old Masters was furthered by the competition between the American collectors Henry Clay Frick and Henry Huntington. While the art trade in London was seriously disrupted by the Great War,⁴⁰ the peace settlement was followed by a flood of interest and reinvestment in the art world, stimulated by rising prosperity, an increased American interest in the arts, and the mounting death duties placed on many of Britain's highest incomes.⁴¹ The weight of these taxes certainly played a part in the sale of Anthony Van Dyck's *Portrait of a Genoese Noblewoman* to Henry Clay Frick after the death of the 2nd duke of Abercorn in 1913. In the years following the war the Dufferin family also sold work to Frick, using the profits from these sales to pay the duties after the death of the 2nd marquess from pneumonia in 1918.⁴²

Yet, while the increased cost of living during the war years stimulated some of the highest painting sales to date, the period was followed by devaluation, and values in the art market in the 1920s were lower, although steady.⁴³ Even in the face of post-war deflation, the market was still strongest for paintings from the British Golden Age of painting: the Dartreys sold a selection of works between the inventory made of the house in 1920 and the auction of their goods in 1937, including another portrait by Angelica Kaufman, two works by Sir

³⁷ PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1939/27/12. Catalogue of the Pictures and Miniatures at Crom Castle by Curwen & Co., Dublin, Printers, 1910; Erne Papers, D/1939/27/26. A box containing inventories, etc., of Crom Castle, c. 1907

³⁸ Watson, *From Manet to Manhattan*, pp.186-7

³⁹ *ibid.*, p.185

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.199

⁴¹ Reitlinger, *The Economics of Taste*, pp.191-2,201; Watson, *From Manet to Manhattan*, p.202

⁴² *Paintings in The Frick Collection: American, British, Dutch, Flemish and German*. Volume I. New York: The Frick Collection, 1968; Lawrence Park Letters, Box 1 Folder 11, 1919,1922,1924

⁴³ Reitlinger, *The Economics of Taste*, pp.xiii,202

Thomas Lawrence, a painting in the style of Reynolds, and three works by Claude Joseph Vernet.⁴⁴

However, the lower market values of art in the 1920s may have had a long-term effect on the solvency of some of the north of Ireland's aristocratic families, and rather than selling one or two key pieces for sky-high prices, as did the Abercorns and Dufferins in the 1910s, families like the Kilmoreys and the Dartreys were forced to sell their entire collections at auction. At Mourne Park, the Kilmorey family sold their collection in 1924, likely to pay debts incurred in the renovations on the house and on entertaining in the preceding years.⁴⁵ Similarly, the family at Dawson's Grove were able to hold on to much of their collection until the 1920s, and only began making the above mentioned sales after the Great War. However, the death of the 2nd earl in 1920, the 3rd earl in 1933, and the failing economy of the later 1920s and 1930s took a heavy toll on the family's fortune. A miraculous year for the art market was forecast in 1928, but never materialized.⁴⁶ The result for the Dartrey collection was that the entire contents of the house was auctioned before its demolition in 1937.⁴⁷

The impetus to sell for these families was largely based in the changes in the landed economy from the 1870s onward, although the specific circumstances in which these families found themselves during this period varied. There is, within the collecting patterns of these families, a specific tie to the fluctuations in the fortunes of the landed classes in the wake of the Land Acts, as well as to demands made on the elite pocketbook by taxation, by the upkeep of country homes, and by the responsibilities of aristocratic family life. Legislation from Westminster during this period increasingly offered the landowner short term gain at the expense of long-term profit: land sales offered a surge in income that would be followed by a decrease in rental incomes as the parcel under tenancy diminished.

⁴⁴ PRONI, Dartrey Papers, D/3053/8/26/1-12. List of Oil Paintings of the Earl of Dartrey, deceased, made for Bennett and Son, Ltd., by Wm. Martin and Son, Solicitors, 60 Dawson Street, Dublin and Monaghan. Copy of a list of oil paintings of the Earl of Dartrey made in 1920. Dartrey Papers, D/3053/8/26/4. Auction catalogue of the contents of Dartrey Castle for Jackson Stops and McCabe, 1937

⁴⁵ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/H/26/1-3. Sotheby catalogue for Mourne Park sale, 1924

⁴⁶ Watson, *From Manet to Manhattan*, p.207

⁴⁷ PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1939/27/12. Catalogue of the Pictures and Miniatures at Crom Castle by Curwen & Co., Dublin, Printers, 1910; Erne Papers, D/1939/27/26. A box containing inventories, etc., of Crom Castle, c. 1907. Dartrey Papers, D/3053/8/26/1-12. List of Oil Paintings of the earl of Dartrey, deceased, made for Bennett and Son, Ltd., by Wm. Martin and Son, Solicitors, 60 Dawson Street, Dublin and Monaghan. Copy of a list of oil paintings of the earl of Dartrey made in 1920. Dartrey Papers, D/3053/8/26/4. Auction catalogue of the contents of Dartrey Castle for Jackson Stops and McCabe, 1937

The tendency among these families seems to have been a heavy dependence on a system of credit. Investment in art, or more frequently, in architecture, in the form of upgrades to the elite country house, was generally followed by a retrenchment period in which collections or land were sold. There was no direct connection between the realization of profits from sale and re-investment in their homes: it actually appears that the aristocracy of Ulster tended to reverse this pattern, and would invest on credit before selling land or collections in order to pay debts and make family payments. Alternately, families like the Abercorns and the Dufferins sold art in order to pay death duties, again making the sale once the demand for payment had been made. This method of expenditure, followed by retrenchment and sale, reflects the way the elite traditionally used money: the system of credit as based on honour, long-term landed holdings, and social capital was one of the cornerstones of elite society of Britain and Ireland from the seventeenth century, and an aspect of the establishment of the ruling class.

Within the artistic and literary works housed in any country house, family and ancestral portraiture was the most important aspect of the collection. Kenneth McConkey has described aristocratic society as an intricate social club, one that held very specific requirements for membership. According to McConkey, 'portraiture functioned within the extended membership of this club, its chosen painters conferring badges of membership,'⁴⁸ while Barnard has seen early-modern portraiture as an embodiment of 'the continuities and connections of a dynasty.'⁴⁹ As such, a portrait (particularly a portrait executed by one of the finest painters of the day) was an important part of the constructed status of the aristocrat, and a symbol of their tie to the aristocratic, landed community.

The question of family honour may have been intertwined in these commissions, particularly as the homes of many Ulster aristocrats boasted large collections of art, premier among which were the centuries of family portraits that had been collected and protected by generations of forebears. Portraits were the physical manifestations of a glorious family tree and spelled out the inherited, as well as the personal, status of their sitter. As such, they were components of the created sense of elite honour and lineage. Bourdieu has seen cultural interaction as intrinsically tied to questions of honour and status, thereby explaining the interest of certain sectors of society in symbolic capital even at times of conflict and

⁴⁸ McConkey, *Memory and Desire*, p.86

⁴⁹ Barnard, *Making the Grand Figure*, p.162

economic distress.⁵⁰ For the aristocracy of the north of Ireland, the continuance of the tradition of portraiture was crucially important to support their concepts of individual and familial honour: abandonment of the traditions of ancestral representation would be both a betrayal of their dynastic reputation, and would cause the family to lose face within Society. These paintings were, therefore, most important as a part of a group, rather than as individual representations of figures or as works of art. In analyzing the role of portraiture within these families, this discussion will, therefore, primarily concentrate on a conceptual idea of portraiture, rather than on separate paintings or the individual aspects of specific portraits. It is the cultural trends that these paintings show, not specifics of style or personal identity, which are indicative of the wider culture of these families.

Because of the importance placed on the portrait within the aristocratic collection, the portraitist accordingly held a key function within the network of artistic patronage in the aristocratic household, and during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the portraitist acquired an increasingly large role in the creation of this world of elite culture and aesthetics. The ability to commission portraits and other works from one of the premier artists of the period was of paramount importance to the aristocracy, and even within this elite group the artists used by each particular family make clear the existence of a hierarchy of economic and cultural power.

The Londonderrys, who were at the forefront of the social and political world, and who had economic entitlement that outweighed almost all of their contemporaries, had connections with the more exalted artists, including John Singer Sargent, John Lavery, and Philip de Laszlo. Families with their own artistic bent were also connected with these artists, to an extent, though the relationship forged between Shane Leslie and John Lavery, for example, was very different than that between Lavery and the 7th marquess of Londonderry. Less well-connected families patronised less illustrious artists: the 4th earl of Erne and his wife were painted by Henry Graves, a respected and well-known (but not celebrated) portraitist, while other members of the family were painted by Herbert Sidney and Andrea Romagnoli in the 1880s.⁵¹ The earl of Enniskillen chose as the sculptor of his bust at Florence Court the Dublin-based, Fermanagh-born, Joseph Watkins, who received similar

⁵⁰ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p.129

⁵¹ PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1939/27/12. Catalogue of the Pictures and Miniatures at Crom Castle by Curwen & Co., Dublin, Printers, 1910

commissions from a number of Fermanagh magnates of the period.⁵² The Dartrey family used less well-established portraitists, and as a group often failed even to record the identities of these painters within their family records.⁵³

The continuance of an altered form of traditional artistic patronage may also be related to wider-spread decline in private patronage: at the same time that the increased autonomy of the artistic community was preventing the traditional model of patronage from functioning in any significant way, government and corporate funding was beginning to further erode the role the aristocracy previously held as patrons of the arts.⁵⁴ As has been discussed, the role of the aristocracy in artistic and literary patronage was a key element of the success of individual artists and authors, as well as institutions and foundations. By the second half of the nineteenth century this form of private patronage was decreasing, and according to Barrett and Sheehy, public patronage was also limited.⁵⁵ In Belfast, the incidences of patronage by Ulster's aristocrats were limited to official requirements and vice-regal openings: in 1876, while acting as Lord Lieutenant, the duke of Abercorn was patron of the Industrial Exhibition. At this point, the patronage of the landed classes still seems to have been significant, according to Eileen Black, and both peers and their wives, including the duchess of Abercorn, were involved in promoting and organising the Exhibition and the associated bazaar.⁵⁶ By the 1880s, however, this sort of involvement was rare among aristocrats in the north of Ireland, and the presence of the marquess of Londonderry during his time as Lord Lieutenant in Belfast at prize-giving ceremonies and the opening of the Public Library in 1888 seems to have been superficial and perfunctory.⁵⁷ Similarly, F.S.L. Lyons has remarked on a lack of available interest and patronage (in Lyons' case, literary patronage) in the north of Ireland in the late nineteenth century,⁵⁸ and this dearth may be, at least in part, due to a change in the very nature of the patronage system.

⁵² PRONI, Introduction to the Enniskillen Papers, p.25

⁵³ PRONI, Dartrey Papers, D/3053/8/26/1-12. List of Oil Paintings of the Earl of Dartrey, deceased, made for Bennett and Son, Ltd., by Wm. Martin and Son, Solicitors, 60 Dawson Street, Dublin and Monaghan. Copy of a list of oil paintings of the Earl of Dartrey made in 1920

⁵⁴ David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (London, 1992), p.102

⁵⁵ Barrett and Sheehy, "Visual arts and society, 1850-1900", p.439

⁵⁶ Eileen Black, *Art in Belfast, 1760-1888: Art Lovers or Philistines?* (Dublin, 2006), p.186

⁵⁷ Black, *Art in Belfast*, pp.199,207

⁵⁸ F.S.L. Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland, 1890-1939* (Oxford, 1979), p.130

The waning role of the aristocrat as patron in Britain is reflective of the changes being wrought in the art world by the market forces of modern capitalism: artists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had access to a system that included multiple metropolitan and provincial galleries and exhibitions that rendered the traditional forces of patronage, if not unnecessary, generally superfluous to their artistic advancement. Whereas in the early modern period the aristocracy had held almost exclusive access to the ‘power of cultural arbitration,’ the modernisation of the art market had necessarily removed that power from the elite and distributed it across the entire educated population.⁵⁹ Because of this, the late Victorian and Edwardian artist had a wider public to please—partially rendering any possible displeasure of a single client much less significant than artistic failure in the eyes of the public.

Kenneth McConkey deals in passing with the question of the changing role of the artistic commission in nineteenth and twentieth century society, asserting that the clients of the great Victorian and Edwardian artists ‘knew the price they would pay and the risks they were taking with painters who were concerned to achieve a likeness of high aesthetic value.’⁶⁰ Imbuing any object with high aesthetic value meant the associated conferment of a high socio-cultural value to that thing: it is valued expressly because it references things the elite understand and are familiar with, which they associate with those cultural markers they have learned are important, and which are particular to them and their peers. These markers are thereby an understood elite symbol for breeding, power, money, and taste. The risks in choosing an artist who might assert a greater level of control were apparently worthwhile: by relinquishing some level of influence over the image that would be created, the aristocratic client would thereby gain the prestige of having not only a likeness of themselves to add to the ancestral gallery, but also a work of aesthetic value that could stand on its own within a worthy collection of art. Within this context, however, it is hard to see the aristocrat as a ‘patron’, rather than a ‘client’: though inequality is inherent within the system of patronage,⁶¹ it seems as if the reins of control have been wrested from the aristocrat and placed firmly in the hands of the artist.

⁵⁹ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p.135

⁶⁰ McConkey, *Memory and Desire*, p.13

⁶¹ Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (London, 1992), p.72

And yet, in the face of a continued ancestral and societal expectation that they would fulfil the role of patron, many aristocrats did launch themselves as such (as did Edith, marchioness of Londonderry after 1915), though the relationships formed in this new system were initiated on different terms than those their predecessors had developed in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For many aristocrats in the early twentieth century, the social boundaries between the aristocracy and the creative elite formed by the leading artists and writers of the time were becoming increasingly blurred, thereby rendering the role of ‘superior’ patron and ‘inferior’ artist obsolete. In the wake of the Great War, aristocrats like the Londonderrys and the Leslies found themselves not patronising the artists who painted their portraits, but alternatively befriending them.

This was not necessarily the case throughout this period, however, and there are differences in the relationships between aristocratic families and the artists they used both over time, and between different families. In the 1870s Lord Crichton (later 4th earl Erne) commissioned from Henry Graves a double portrait of his wife and son. The painting was duly hung in Crom Castle, and became a part of the large collection of pictures owned by the family. Despite this, in his letter to the artist Lord Crichton shows no enthusiasm for the work he has just received: on receipt of the picture in September 1876 he duly wrote to Graves, confirming that the pictures had arrived and enclosing a cheque for £735, but expressing neither pleasure nor displeasure at the portrayal of his wife and son.⁶²

Similarly, in 1912, Lord Newry (later 4th earl of Kilmorey), promptly sent a cheque to the German artist Pirsch for his own portrait, but enclosed nothing else.⁶³ The response of these aristocrats to their likenesses may reflect the fact that by the late nineteenth century portraiture had become *de rigueur* for Society, and that the requirement of a formal portrait was representative of social requirements and drudgery, rather than an aesthetic pleasure or an intellectual pursuit. The money, heart, and interest of the aristocrat may no longer have been primarily invested in these show pieces, but their creation continued for reasons that had little to do with aesthetic preferences and taste.

⁶² PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1939/21/9/43. Letter and receipt from the Hon Henry Graves, Etterick House, Cromwell Road, London, to Lord Crichton, 25 September 1876

⁶³ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/D/14/15-16. Records of portrait painting of Lord Newry by R. Pirsch, 1912

Alternatively, there are other explanations for the lack of communication between Lord Crichton and Graves on the one hand, and Lord Newry and Pirsch on the other. In the case of Lord Crichton's portrait commissions, the timing is crucial: the relationship between artist and client had yet to begin its twentieth century shift. This was, however, well on the way by the 1910s, as is evidenced by the relationship that was already growing between Edith, Lady Castlereagh and the artists who would form the core membership of her interwar social club, The Ark. The Ark brought politically relevant figures together with members of the artistic and literary worlds, such as William Orpen, who while a leading figure in the British and Irish art scene from the turn of the twentieth century into the interwar years, had no professional contacts with the Londonderry family.⁶⁴ The painter Sir John Lavery and his wife Hazel were also early members of the Ark, and the couple often stayed with the Londonderrys, even from time to time combining social and professional visits, such as the occasion when Lavery painted Archbishop Charles D'Arcy of Armagh while both were guests at Mount Stewart.⁶⁵

The friendship began before the Great War, and the commission of a portrait of the marquess of Londonderry in 1919 marked the continuance of the relationship, despite the political turbulence of those years.⁶⁶ The unusual pairing of the Unionist Londonderry family and the Republican Laverys may be explained by looking more deeply at the goals of the two men in their politico-cultural activities; Kenneth McConkey has suggested that in painting both Catholic and Protestant clerics Lavery was taking a clear non-sectarian stance while trying to use art, and portraiture in particular, to forge a common cultural heritage among the Irish people.⁶⁷ In many ways, this was what the efforts of sympathetic Ulster Unionists had concentrated on in the face of the partition crisis, and though these labours failed, the Londonderry family were among those who saw more clearly that which was shared across Ireland and Britain than that which divided them.

⁶⁴ Barrett and Sheehy, "Visual arts and society, 1900-21" in *A New History of Ireland VI* (ed. W.E. Vaughan) (Oxford, 1996), p.487

⁶⁵ H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Londonderrys: A Family Portrait* (London, 1979), p.147; Kenneth McConkey, *Sir John Lavery* (Edinburgh, 1993), p.155

⁶⁶ McConkey, *Lavery*, p.154

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p.155

As Fleming has recognised, the Laverys also provided a bridge between the Londonderrys and the Sinn Féin representatives, such as Michael Collins,⁶⁸ and it was partly the informality and friendship encouraged by Edith Londonderry that not only made possible some communication between these groups, but kept the Londonderrys at the centre of the political and cultural world. It may be the case that, as well as pre-dating some of the large-scale transitions that would occur in artistic relationships in the early twentieth century, the above mentioned letters between aristocrats and artists demonstrate certain social boundaries that were obeyed when commissioning a portrait, particularly that the beauty of artwork should not be coarsened by the discussion of money. The letter between Lord Newry and Pirsch may have been one that was necessary to take care of business, while praise of the work and social niceties may have been sent under separate cover. Alternatively, the difference in status between the artists may also have influenced the sort of relationships they were able to culture with their aristocratic clients. John Singer Sargent was recognised as an artistic genius and treated as such within society; Pirsch, on the other hand, may have been seen as little more than a glorified tradesman, and therefore not someone with whom a relationship could be pursued.

Additionally, the social status of the client may have played a role, influencing the interaction between artist and aristocrat. Wealthy, socially prominent aristocrats like the marchioness of Londonderry had room to be liberal—her position was extremely secure. The involvement of the Londonderrys in the arts demonstrates that while in the Edwardian era the aristocracy no longer held the exclusive rights to artistic patronage, the power and influence of certain families in this area was still extensive. More marginal figures like the Ernes and the Kilmoreys were necessarily more concerned about the mobility of their status, and therefore had to be more cautious about transgressing social boundaries. This highlights the fact that, even within the narrow sphere of the twelve aristocratic families included in this study, there were discrepancies between families of great wealth (such as the Londonderrys) or impeccable status (like the Abercorns), those who were representative of more bohemian (the Leslies) or sporting (the Ernes) influences, and those clans of more limited means (such as the Belmores), and that throughout the long period of this study, the status of many of

⁶⁸ N.C. Fleming, *The Marquess of Londonderry: Aristocracy, Power, and Politics in Britain and Ireland* (London, 2005), p.92

these families shifted, as their cultural, economic, social, marital, and political decisions coloured their collective futures.

Within this chapter, the role of the artistic collection and the place patronage of the arts played within elite life has been explored, looking primarily at paintings as manifestations of the image which the landed classes presented to their peers and to the outside world. Artistic taste, largely shared among the landed classes, was cultured into the elite from early in their lives, becoming an ingrained aspect of their upbringing and educations. This chapter has examined the rise of the art market and the role elite sales played in stimulating the creation of a new means of transferring art ownership, and the ways in which the peers of the north of Ireland specifically used this new market to help revitalize their fortunes and preserve the bulk of their collections. Additionally, this chapter has looked at portraiture, and the important role it played in elite life, both as a representation of self and family, and as a means by which the elite made professional contact with those artists who were commanding increased social powers as the networks of patronage changed in the early twentieth century.

The management of the artistic collections during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries demonstrates some of the ways in which Ulster's aristocracy adapted in the face of political and economic challenges during this time. The creation of the art market in the 1880s was due to the unprecedented willingness of the upper classes to sell their cultural repositories, but this must be seen as an active choice to sacrifice selected aspects of the elite inheritance, not as a last-ditch effort on the part of a beleaguered and disenfranchised class. The elite chose to sell pieces from their collections—often the most marketable pieces—in order to preserve and retain the whole, reflecting their intention to preserve their patrimonies. Additionally, some members of the elite were able to add to their collections in such a way as to actually increase their social capital, even as their financial and political powers were waning. The alteration of networks of patronage and clientage during the first two decades of the twentieth century offered opportunities for the elite to make connections with those cultural figures who would command social power in the twentieth century in a new way, offering commissions and new connections to these figures, and securing from them representations of their families and way of life that would offer a greater social relevance in the following decades.

The role the portrait played within the elite collection was emphasised during this period in the regular commissioning of new works of portraiture from within these families,

even as the ownership of other forms of art was sacrificed on the newly established art market. The portrait was a physical representation for these families of the important principles which guided aristocratic life, and the role the gallery of portraits played in the country home was crucially important to presenting to both family members and outsiders the history of each individual clan. This was a symbol of the shared background of the landed classes, and as such, the portrait collection, along with the entire art collection, served as a badge of membership of these privileged families. The shared, collective taste of the country house art collection was just one of many manifestations of the tightly knit elite community, and the preservation of that community played a part in encouraging the elite to preserve their artistic, as well as their landed, architectural, and leisured, legacies.

SEVEN

COMMUNITY AND TRADITION: THE METROPOLITAN SOCIETY OF ARISTOCRATIC ULSTER

In 1886, the commentator J.H.S. Escott, writing as an anonymous ‘Foreign Resident’, claimed that there was actually very little difference between elite parties in the countryside and those in London, except location and length: ‘They must observe at these gatherings the same principles that they do at their dinner parties in town. Country house hospitalities are, in fact, London dinner parties prolonged over two or three days.’¹ Doubtless the Victorian and Edwardian aristocrat would assert that Escott had missed the subtleties of elite entertaining, as families from across Britain and Ireland ritualistically made the yearly trip to London in the late spring, generally staying until Cowes Week began in early August.² In the spring, aristocratic families from the north of Ireland closed their country homes, spending the summer months primarily in London, in either family or rented accommodation, and using the ‘summer frolic’ in London as a break from aristocratic entertainment in the country.³

What were these principles of entertainment, which dictated elite Society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and which in Escott’s view were the same in both town and country? Largely, the goal of leisure in both locations was to reinforce the concept of the elite community, reforging bonds of kinship and friendship that had fallen out of use, and integrating (in a limited fashion) newer elements into the existing fabric of Society without interrupting it. These principles, and the ways in which they directed and shaped the interaction of the aristocracy of the north of Ireland within Society, will form the first section

¹ J.H.S. Escott, *Society in London, By a Foreign Resident* (London, 1886), p.57

² Constance Malleson, *After Ten Years* (London, 1931), p.30

³ Anita Leslie, *The Marlborough House Set* (London, 1973), pp.6,14

of this chapter, which will examine ideas about seeing and being seen, fashion and self-presentation, formality, and the larger concept of community.

London Society was, however, distinct from that found in the countryside during this period, and interactions with London society were used differently by these elite families than those activities which they planned and encouraged on their own estates. Social life in London offered a greater scope of entertainment, a wider range of guests, and a closer relationship to the nexus of power in the form of Parliament and the central location of the monarchy, at least in geographical, if not actual, terms. These aspects of the leisured existence were as important to aristocratic families from the north of Ireland as they were to their peers across the United Kingdom, though they did not make up the total value of the cultural world these peers experienced in the metropolis. The analysis within this chapter is centred on how these peers used and adapted their leisure practises between 1870 and 1925 to help retain the social relevance of the aristocratic classes in the north of Ireland. In an era of declining power and increased instability, the aristocracy used the tools of formality, invented tradition, and the media to buoy their cultural fortunes. Within the closed world of London Society, and especially within its most elite venues and events, the aristocracy of the north of Ireland continually integrated their families into the elite community of Britain and Ireland's supranational peerage. For these individuals, and for their families, London was the central location in which they were able to reinforce their elite community and recast their cultural patterns in ways that would help them retain relevance in the twentieth century.

The most important aspect of the yearly visit to London, and to a lesser extent to Dublin, was the sense of community that was promoted and sustained during the months the majority of the elite world converged on the city. Within the imperial capital, the peers of Ulster could experience a collective space with their fellows from across the United Kingdom, sharing their lives and leisure with these families as a group, and thereby supporting their concept of the cultural union, which confirmed their role as leaders within a wider British and Irish system. As Ross McKibbin has recognised, even into the twentieth century, this was one of the crucial roles played by Society: 'Society, both as a fact and as a popular conception, acted to perpetuate the upper classes as a social institution, as an upper class, and to hinder the decay of their political authority.'⁴ The aristocracy of Ulster sought to

⁴ Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England, 1918-1951* (Oxford, 1998), p.37

adapt their social world in such a way that its central principles were preserved, and their power and role at the centre of Society were retained. Within the city, the aristocracy encouraged the re-establishment of exclusive, elite communities, which manifested themselves in Society itself more generally, but more specifically in smaller social groups and in gentlemen's clubs. In this, the aristocracy of Ulster reflect the wider priorities of the elite within the United Kingdom as a whole, rather than their own regional idiosyncrasies.

There were, however, additionally aspects of Ulster Society that were particular to these families, and which were not necessarily shared with all of their peers from across the United Kingdom. The existence of two Seasons for the aristocracy of the north of Ireland is reflective of the psychology and social climate of the northern peers, as recognised by F.S.L. Lyons. 'The central fact about Ulster,' he writes, is 'that it has always experienced a double pull—towards the rest of Ireland, and also towards the larger island.'⁵ This double pull became a part of the economic, political, and social worlds of the aristocracy of Ulster during the nineteenth century, and the engagement of these families with the Season in Dublin as a preliminary and inferior 'warm up' for the larger festivities in London is reflective of the place they were trying to establish for themselves in both countries. Diane Urquhart has seen the large-scale interaction of families like the Londonderrys with the world of London Society as unusual for Irish aristocrats, and this may be true on the whole. For some elite Irish families, Dublin was the centre of their social world, and contact with London was (as Urquhart has characterised it) 'transient'.⁶ Urquhart recognises the preservation of the distinct nature of Irish society well into the twentieth century, and the manifestation of this separateness in the continuance of the column in *The Queen* entitled 'Society in Ireland.'⁷ However, in saying that the Londonderrys were unusual, Urquhart misses the subtleties of the aristocratic hierarchy. Uniquely wealthy, socially active, Unionist peers like the Londonderrys would always engage primarily with London, while lower level Irish aristocracy and gentry might be more financially or socially comfortable in Dublin.

Among their neighbours in the north of Ireland, the Londonderrys were certainly not unusual in their social emphasis on London society, and shared with this group a greater desire to engage with the metropolitan capital. Newspapers like *The Morning Post* included

⁵ F.S.L. Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland, 1890-1939* (Oxford, 1979), p.115

⁶ Diane Urquhart, *The Ladies of Londonderry: Women and Political Patronage* (London, 2007), p.6

⁷ Urquhart, *The Ladies of Londonderry*, p.6

daily comprehensive lists of the movement of members of the aristocracy, as well as specialist sections, like their 'Fashionable Entertainments' column, dedicated to recording the movements of the elite in London, Dublin, and the countryside. These columns record that while January to March was the height of the fashionable year in Dublin, and April through July tended to be the most active months for London Society, the movement of these families was sporadic, and individuals and families as a whole altered their pattern of movement from year to year. Some families, such as the Kilmoreys, barely patronised the Dublin Season at all by the early twentieth century, while others, like the Annesleys, found themselves returning to Dublin Society again and again. Priscilla Moore, later countess Annesley, had been the belle of Dublin when she met the 5th earl Annesley there in 1892, but the couple was married in London at Marylebone later that year.⁸ It is clear that the Annesleys used Dublin as a practise ground before their annual pilgrimage to the imperial capital: Lady Mabel Annesley, the earl's daughter from his first marriage, came out in Dublin before being brought to London to make her debut more publicly.⁹ Alvin Jackson, among others, has referred to these Irish peers as 'West Britons', emphasising that despite their nominal status as Ulstermen, they were more at home in the Commons or in the clubs of London than with 'the brashness of Belfast Unionism.'¹⁰ In fact, Belfast never became a significant social destination for these families: their cultural home was in the imperial capital. Accordingly, in examining the place the metropolitan schedule of entertainment had in the social and cultural lives of the aristocracy, this chapter will concentrate more heavily on the role of London, only briefly using Dublin as an area for comparison. While Dublin was a part of the social world of the Ulster aristocrat, even for those peers who served as Lord Lieutenant (such as the 1st duke of Abercorn and the 6th marquess of Londonderry), Society there never attained the status held by the social world of London. The Dublin Season remained secondary for the greatest families of the Ulster peerage.

While politics were a part of Society throughout the United Kingdom, for politically- or imperially-minded peers, Dublin would always remain secondary. According to Toby Barnard, eighteenth-century Dublin thrived because it 'performed many parts': housing the

⁸ Malleson, *After Ten Years*, p.13

⁹ Lady Mabel Annesley, *As the Sight is Bent*, edited by Constance Malleson (London, 1964, p.82

¹⁰ Alvin Jackson, *The Ulster Party: Irish Unionists in the House of Commons, 1884-1911* (Oxford, 1989), p.16

government, the Parliament, the Viceregal Court, the central law courts, and the university.¹¹ The removal of the parliamentary, judicial, and many of the governmental aspects of Dublin life meant that much of its social significance was also diminished among those who operated in the highest circles, and by the 1870s the city's role as a social centre of the aristocracy had dwindled accordingly. The subsidiary nature of the Dublin Season is reflected in the physical patterns of life in the city during the Season. Firstly, the Dublin Season was short: while the London Season occupied the entire spring and summer, February and the first half of March was the time for festivities in the Irish capital. Additionally, for the aristocrats from the north of Ireland, the cultural significance of the Irish capital had lessened by the late nineteenth century. According to Barnard, within eighteenth-century Dublin society, 'neither the notables in their Palladian mansions with walnut tallboys, silver salvers and champion stallions, nor the worthies priding themselves on the respectability which possessions conferred took their lead from their English rulers in the Castle.'¹² By the end of the nineteenth century this was palpably untrue: while the rulers in the Castle still intentionally directed their political and cultural gaze toward the imperial capital, these leaders were frequently selected from within the Irish peerage. Finally, despite the fact that Dublin society was structured very similarly to that found contemporaneously in London, there were important differences to be found in the Irish capital that reflected the lesser engagement of the aristocracy of the north of Ireland with the Dublin Season: while most of the families under examination kept at least rented accommodation in London during the Season, and the wealthiest families owned grand metropolitan palaces, in Dublin only two families within this group owned homes in Dublin.¹³ While a home within the aristocratic conclave of Mayfair and Belgravia was an important aspect of London Society, in Dublin, it was customary for families to reside in one of the city's hotels, particularly The Shelbourne, on St. Stephen's Green, which was (according to Elizabeth Bowen) 'the focus of Ireland's social and sporting life.'¹⁴

¹¹ Toby Barnard, *Making the Grand Figure: Lives and Possessions in Ireland, 1641-1770* (New Haven, 2004), p.282

¹² Barnard, *Making the Grand Figure*, p.20

¹³ The dukes of Abercorn owned a Dublin townhouses on the fashionable St. Stephen's Green during this period. The earls of Caledon owned a Dublin house at Cavendish Row, on Rutland Square (now Parnell Square).

¹⁴ Mark Bence-Jones, *The Twilight of the Ascendancy* (London, 1987), p.45; Elizabeth Bowen, *The Shelbourne: a centre in Dublin life for more than a century* (London, 1951), p.82

According to Escott, London's elite society in the 1880s was 'more compactly and elaborately organised than in any other country in the world.'¹⁵ The system was more complex than just a group of families who joined together for entertainment in the months between April and August: it was a reaction by the privileged classes to the rapid changes that faced Britain in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, and offered families who had long held political, economic, and social power a method for integrating rising wealth and status without interrupting or disturbing their traditional patterns of life. In the words of Leonore Davidoff, Society was formed as 'a system of quasi-kinship relationships which was used to "place" mobile individuals', thereby minimising rapid change and maximising stability among the governing classes.¹⁶

The social world of the elite in London during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was ruled by a set of principles that guided society, many of which were related to the same currents that shaped elite life outside the metropolis. During this period, the aristocracy of the north of Ireland was characteristic of their class in their ability to alter, change, and adapt aspects of their social world in order to best preserve the whole, and in the city, as in the country, they prioritised ideas of community and tradition, which were used to support the wider system in the face of outside challenges. Within the city, these principles also manifested themselves in specific forms. The idea of the aristocratic community is especially clearly evidenced in the existence of a geographically specific area for elite Society, concentrated around London's West End. From within this aristocratic ghetto, the representatives of the monarchy and the most powerful elite hostesses controlled access to the events that defined the landed classes, using the very exclusivity that was fostered by boundaries of geography, finance, and birth to increase the desirability of these events. Within this world, presentation and display were central, and communicated instantly the social credit of a family. This credit was best demonstrated in three ways: in the physical presence of family members at events and within the public spaces of the elite world; in the sartorial choices made by these representatives of family and caste; and in the adherence of the elite to their own codes of social formality, which were used both to exclude, and to appropriately integrate, new members of the elite into the existing order.

¹⁵ Escott, *Society in London*, p.168

¹⁶ Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles: Society Etiquette and the Season* (London, 1973), p.15

The public requirements of the place the aristocracy held in national, as well as local, government necessitated that the principles of entertainment and display were exercised in the imperial capital as much as they were in the countryside. Visits to London were extremely important for establishing social, political, and marital ties among the aristocracy, and for those peers who sat in the House of Lords, or their sons and brothers who filled a diminishing, but still important, part of the House of Commons, London was the centre of the business of governance. More importantly for establishing a sense of community among the aristocracy, London was the centre of the business of society and social life, and it formed the key location for the gathering of the closely entwined elite of Britain and Ireland. McKibbin has seen that while by the twentieth century, the popular conception of Society had changed from a political elite to a cultural and social upper class, the reality of Society was that the conjunction of the worlds of fashion, learning, power, and sport still guaranteed members the authority to rule, whether directly or indirectly.¹⁷ It was within the townhouse or metropolitan palace that the daily rites which perpetuated this idea of Society occurred. The homes of the greatest aristocrats were not only social arenas, but also operated as adjuncts to the House of Commons, as like-minded friends and family used the homes of the Londonderrys, Lansdownes, and Grosvenors as headquarters, passing even greater control into the hands of the politically and socially active hostesses who welcomed them.¹⁸

Many of these homes, such as Annesley Lodge in Regent's Park, had formed a part of the family's social lives for a generation or more. Annesley Lodge would stay closed for the winter, reopening in May when the family arrived. Lady Mabel Annesley remembered the house as

more like a country place than a town one. When we arrived the may trees were showers of deep pink. Purple iris clumps were out in the garden. If you walked from the far end of the stables to the far end of the garden no other houses could be seen: the tall trees hid them.¹⁹

Like all aristocratic ancestral homes, Annesley Lodge was marked by its previous occupants: the house had been inherited through Lady Annesley from her grandfather, Sir Francis Grant,

¹⁷ McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, p.23

¹⁸ Leonore Davidoff, Megan Doolittle, Janet Fink, Katherine Holden, *The Family Story: Blood, Contract Intimacy, 1830-1960* (London, 1999), p.115; David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (London, 1992), p.350

¹⁹ Annesley, *As the Sight is Bent*, p.13

President of the Royal Academy, who had used a series of rooms there as his studio.²⁰ The Annesleys were, however, unusual within their peer group, as they kept their family home in Regent's Park, despite the fact that its location outside the aristocratic ghetto in the West End physically separated the family from the rest of their class.

The 1870s began with the homes of the Ulster aristocracy speckled liberally across Mayfair and the West End. While the Annesleys lived farther afield, and very wealthy, high-status families like the Londonderrys and Abercorns had fixed accommodation in London at Londonderry House on Park Lane and Hampden House on Green Street, the family of the earls of Kilmorey are more representative of their peers in their pattern of home use in London. From the 1880s onwards they rented a series of homes in London's West End, retaining their residences in Belgrave Square (where Lord Rossmore lived around the same time), Grosvenor Place, Cadogan Square, and Park Lane each for a number of years.²¹ The Leslie's moved around similarly, taking a home in London in 1872 to marry off their daughters, but not establishing a more permanent seat until the 1880s, and swiftly changing their London address a number of times in the 1910s and 20s.²²

The most remarkable aspect of these patterns of lease or ownership was not the frequency with which many of these families changed residence, although the cost and effort expended must have been immense,²³ but the close area in which they were determined to live: in general, the most coveted homes fell into two small, highly desirable districts, Belgravia and Mayfair, formed by the north-east and south-west conjunctions of Hyde and Green Parks at Hyde Park Corner. Mayfair held the mansions of Londonderry and Hampden Houses, as well as the Dartrey residence at Curzon Street, the Kilmorey home at Alford Street, and the later secondary Abercorn home at 35 Park Street.²⁴ Nearby Belgravia, on the other hand, was called home by other aristocratic families, including the Rossmores

²⁰ PRONI, Annesley Papers, T/3774/9. Photo album of the Annesley family, c. 1881

²¹ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/H/5/1-8. Bills to Lady Kilmorey, 1885-1896, 1910-1911; D/2638/D/16/1-3. Address and visitors books, 5 Aldford Street, Park Lane; PRONI, Rossmore Papers, T/2929/14/38. Letter to Lord Rossmore, Belgrave Square, from Hampton & Sons, Surveyors, 29 May 1885

²² Terence Dooley, *The Decline of the Big House in Ireland* (Dublin, 2001), p.48

²³ PRONI, Rossmore Papers, T/2929/29/564. Bill to Lord Rossmore from The Pantechnicon Warehousing Department and Conveyance Department, Motcomb St, Belgrave Square, London SW, 18 Feb 1884

²⁴ PRONI, Belmore Papers, D/3007/I/1. Personal letters to Honoria, Lady Belmore, 1861-1890s, though mostly undated. Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/H/5/1-8. Bills to Lady Kilmorey, 1885-1896, 1910-1913; Abercorn Papers, D/623/D/11/9. Volume containing schedule of pictures at Hampden House and 35 Park Street, 1906

(Belgrave Square), the Belmores (Eaton Place), the Ernes (Upper Belgrave Street), and the Kilmoreys (successively at Belgrave Square, Grosvenor Place, and Cadogan Square, located on the western border of Belgravia).²⁵

By the 1910s, however, some families no longer found their pocketbooks capable of sustaining the high prices in this aristocratic ghetto. This alteration in the pattern of aristocratic life in the city was both affected by the changing financial circumstances of many landowning families, but also in turn had its own affect on the physical and symbolic existence of an elite community in London. By the turn of the twentieth century the Annesleys no longer stayed at Annesley Lodge, and instead rented a smaller house in the West End. Their home at Great Cumberland Place sat on the northern border of the truly fashionable district of Mayfair.²⁶ A few years later, the Leslie's rented even further afield, living first at Talbot Square, Paddington, in the 1910s, and in the 1920s at Westbourne Terrace, located in Bayswater to the north of Hyde Park. The Leslie's regularly opened their home to the 3rd marquess and marchioness of Dufferin, who could no longer afford a London residence at all.²⁷ However, movement away from Mayfair and Belgravia was not always a sign of social degradation, as is evidenced by the earlier ownership of the high-status ancestral Annesley home in Regent's Park, and by the family home of the earls of Caledon at Carlton House Terrace, located in the political, rather than the social, heart of aristocratic London between Pall Mall and St. James' Park. Lady Caledon was characterised as 'very house proud' (both of the home itself and of its elegant location) by her letting agent, Mr. Dillon, but she was not so much so that her fondness for her home kept her from letting it to a suitably wealthy tenant, such as Theresa, dowager marchioness of Londonderry, who took the house on her widowhood in 1916.²⁸

The organisation of London Society was such that social power and authority were divided between two sectors of the elite world. Publicly, entrance to and acceptance within Society lay in the hands of the monarchy, through the guise of a presentation at Court. In

²⁵ PRONI, Belmore Papers, D/3007/1/5. Letters to Honoria, Lady Belmore, during the Belmores' time in Australia; PRONI, Enniskillen Papers, D/1702/12/49/1-2. Miscellaneous letters of the Miller-Mundy family to Lord Cole, 1906; Erne Papers, D/1939/27/23. Marriage Certificate of Lord Crichton, Upper Belgrave Street, and Lady Mary Grosvenor, South St., Grosvenor Square, 1903

²⁶ Malleon, *After Ten Years*, p.84

²⁷ Anita Leslie, *The Gilt and the Gingerbread: An Autobiography* (London, 1981), p.68

²⁸ PRONI, Theresa Londonderry Papers, D/2846/1/13/1. Theresa, dowager marchioness of Londonderry to the Marquess of Londonderry, 19 November 1916

order to be introduced at Court (which was the necessary code of entrée for most elite social events), a sponsor was required, and it was this element of Society that particularly emphasised its exclusive, self-supporting nature, as any sponsor must have already been accepted within the royal circle.²⁹ To an extent, this principle of limited acceptance and mass exclusion helped Society to temporarily sustain its numbers, but even in the 1880s the guidance of the monarchy was already necessary to control the direction of a formerly exclusive group that had broken its bounds.³⁰ The presence of the monarch (or the representative thereof) offered Society the stability it craved in the turbulent late nineteenth century, providing a set of traditional rules and a nucleus around which Society could revolve. Upwardly mobile members of Society were keen to comply with matters of royal etiquette, spawning publications that offered guidance to newcomers on interaction with the members of the Court and the aristocracy, even as the ceremonial traditions of the monarchy became themselves more highly developed and intricate.³¹

Even as socially active a royal as the Prince of Wales was unable to be in attendance at all of the daily events of London Society, and because of this, the actual management of social organisation was primarily in the hands of a group of well-connected aristocrats and wealthy members of the landed gentry. The majority of Society's leaders were powerful women, and these women often held their social authority in conjunction with the political power of their husbands. The authority in each realm was used to enhance status in the other.³² Women like the marchionesses of Londonderry and the countesses of Kilmorey held the reins of Society at the same time that they fostered connections with the monarchy, and it was often the friendship of these Society ladies that sustained a family's connection to the royal family. In her study of the marchionesses of Londonderry Diane Urquhart has recognised both the influence of these women and the contemporary Societal acknowledgment of their power, and quotes Lady Dorothy Nevill on the subject: the aristocratic woman of this period was 'the only being who elects without voting, governs

²⁹ Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, p.24

³⁰ Escott, *Society in London*, p.28

³¹ Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, p.25; David Cannadine, "The Context, Performance, and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the 'Invention of Tradition', c. 1820-1977" in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), pp.101-164

³² Kenneth McConkey, *Memory and Desire: Painting in Britain and Ireland at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (London, 2002), p.94; Escott, *Society in London*, pp.89,100

without law, and decides without appeal.’³³ At the same time, hostesses in this transitional period were crucial in opening up the close ranks of the Victorian upper-classes in order to form the more mixed cultural elite of the twentieth century, acting as ‘prime agents of social mobility in their time.’³⁴

It was primarily these great ladies who oversaw the daily operations of Society, and it was through them that the tools used by Society to foster community and integrate or exclude the upwardly mobile were articulated to the elite. The arsenal of social manipulations at the fingertips of these women was vast, and they used public spaces, fashion, the private home, and social events to further the interests of their families and of Society as a whole. The marchioness of Dufferin and Ava was not one of the nominal leaders of Society, as the marquess’ career kept the family away from Britain much of the time. Yet, as the wife of a diplomat and a woman raised within the Victorian aristocratic ethos, she had a strong understanding of the principles that guided Society, a knowledge which she tried to impart to her three daughters. ‘Most of not going to things in London,’ she wrote to her daughter, Lady Hermione Blackwood, in the early 1890s, when Hermione debuted in London and was struggling with securing invitations to elite events, ‘is that unless you are constantly seen you are forgotten, and people who would be glad to ask you if only they remembered you, don’t.’ Lady Dufferin urged her daughter to accompany a family party to Ascot, where she would be ‘brought to mind again.’³⁵

Partly, the requirement of a continual presence at social events during the 1890s may have been because the social landscape during this time was beginning to change. By the turn of the twentieth century, the great aristocratic hostesses were increasingly finding themselves faced by new entrants into the realm of social leadership. What these new women lacked in inherited tradition—Masters has credited Theresa and Edith Londonderry as having been born into entertaining, along with backs ‘straight enough to support the weigh of the most famous tiara in London’³⁶—they made up for in purchasing power. The more flexible and forward-looking of Ulster’s aristocrats swiftly aligned themselves with these new hostesses,

³³ Ralph Nevill (ed.), *Lady Dorothy Nevill. My Own Times* (London, 1912), pp.7,129

³⁴ Brian Masters, *Great Hostesses* (London, 1982), p.2; Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England, 1918-1951* (Oxford, 1998), p.26

³⁵ PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/M/2/9. Harriot, Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava to Lady Hermione Blackwood, n.d.

³⁶ Masters, *Great Hostesses*, p.35

especially after the Great War, and by the 1920s, the Londonderrys, as well as their social secretary, Charles Stirling (a nephew of Lord Rossmore), regularly found themselves on the invitation lists of hostesses like Laura Corrigan, along with other peers closely connected with the aristocracy of the north of Ireland, including the marchioness of Blandford.³⁷

While London was undoubtedly the centre of the urban world of the aristocrat, the aristocracy of the north of Ireland had an additional metropolitan social sphere with which many families engaged and dispensed their socio-political duties: that of Dublin, where a short Season ran in February and March of every year, immediately preceding the exodus to London.³⁸ In Dublin, as in London, Society was centred around the representatives of the royal family, in this case the government at Dublin Castle, where a levee and a Drawing Room hosted by the Lord Lieutenant began the annual festivities.³⁹ The Drawing Room that opened the Season was followed by a series of smaller dinners and dances in the Throne Room, and by house parties and private balls in the townhouses of the wealthy across Dublin.⁴⁰

The most favoured members of the elite often found themselves leading, or included in, the Viceregal party. During the seasons of 1874 to 1876 the duke and duchess of Abercorn served as Viceroy and Vicereine for the second time, and these roles were later filled by the marquess and marchioness of Londonderry from August 1886 until July of 1889. The role was an ambiguous one, as is represented by Dublin's contemporary media. The Viceroy, according to the *Freeman's Journal*, 'is the emblem of Royalty, and, like Royalty itself, is little more than a pageant—the outward significance of a people's will.'⁴¹ The appointment of the duke of Abercorn to his second viceroyalty in 1874 was greeted with enthusiasm by the Dubliners, and the *Journal* praised the Duke—'half an Irishman'—as more qualified by his Irish heritage to take the position than any of his predecessors.⁴² By the time of the duke's death in 1885, however, a year before the marquess of Londonderry took up the same post, the *North-Eastern Daily Gazette* implied that the attitude to the Lord Lieutenancy had changed in the previous decade: 'in his [the 1st duke of Abercorn] day the Lord lieutenancy

³⁷ *ibid.*, pp.202-205

³⁸ Bence-Jones, *Twilight of the Ascendancy*, p.44

³⁹ *ibid.*, p.44

⁴⁰ Bence-Jones, *Twilight of the Ascendancy*, pp.44,52

⁴¹ *The Freeman's Journal and Daily Commerical Advertiser* (Dublin), 20 April 1874

⁴² *ibid.*

had not become an object of abomination to the Nationalists.’⁴³ The Dufferins were occasional, but not consistent, attendees of the Dublin Season, and despite the recognition within the family of the secondary nature of the Season (all three Dufferin daughters debuted in London, not Dublin), the Marquess and Marchioness brought to Dublin their characteristic diplomacy and style.⁴⁴ This was, doubtless, part of their diplomatic responsibility: as the leaders of various viceregal courts and embassies across Europe and the Empire, the Dufferins were expected to bestow their society on Dublin Castle when they could.

While serving their own term as Viceroy and Vicereine, the marquess and marchioness of Londonderry visited the 2nd duke and duchess of Abercorn at Baronscourt in December of 1887.⁴⁵ Other peers considered invitations to join the viceregal party important, and it is clear that such occasions were markers of social achievement. Lord and Lady Rossmore and the 4th earl and countess of Erne were among the guests staying at the Viceregal Lodge in Phoenix Park with Lord and Lady Cadogan in 1896,⁴⁶ an event the Rossmores considered important enough that they cut and preserved newspaper clippings about their stay. In April of 1899 the Cadogans again hosted a number of northern peers at Phoenix Park, including the 2nd duke of Abercorn, the marquess of Londonderry and Lady Helen Stewart, and Lady Kathleen Cole, among a group which honoured the visit of the duke and duchess of York and centred on the attendance of the races at Punchestown.⁴⁷

Newspapers invariably listed the names of guests in hierarchical order, while society journals concentrated their coverage on the elite figures in attendance and on the clothes they wore at these events: Mittie, Lady Rossmore, was a favourite in the press for her fashionable dresses and ‘beautiful diamonds’ as much as she and her husband were favoured by Society for their company.⁴⁸ In 1898 Harriot, marchioness of Dufferin and Ava garbed herself in formal black satin with a glittering diamond tiara for the year’s opening Drawing Room.⁴⁹

⁴³ *North Eastern Daily Gazette*, “Death of the Duke of Abercorn”, 2 November 1885

⁴⁴ PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/M/1/24. 1st marquess of Dufferin and Ava to Lady Hermione Blackwood, 9 February 1898

⁴⁵ *Morning Post*, 10 December 1877

⁴⁶ PRONI, Rossmore Papers, T/2929/13/106. News clipping from *St. Paul’s*, “Our Irish Letter: Society in Dublin”, 14 Mar 1896.

⁴⁷ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 7 April 1899

⁴⁸ PRONI, Rossmore Papers, T/2929/13/111-112. News clipping from an unknown journal, n.d.; T/2929/13/106. News clipping from *St. Paul’s*, “Our Irish Letter: Society in Dublin”, 14 Mar 1896

⁴⁹ PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/M/1/24. Marquess of Dufferin and Ava to Lady Hermione Blackwood, 9 February 1898

Ross McKibbin has recognised the important role Britain's press played in the preservation and sustainment of the idea of Society both for the elite and for the wider reading public. Elite journals, like *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Morning Post*, and the weekly style and social magazines, such as *The Gentlewoman* and *The Queen*, carried Society coverage almost continually, as did the more populist papers, such as *The Daily Mail*, and weekend papers like *The News of the World*, in which sensationalised coverage of the upper classes could be found by the interwar years.⁵⁰ By the 1930s, the public character of Society was recognised, and was seen both as a particular aspect of London Society, as well as for the benefit of the middle classes. Fashion and glamour were intrinsically associated with Society and with the interest in Society: 'It is above all the vast lower middle classes who are most passionately interested in what sort of dress the Duchess was wearing; The first duty of Society is to be a show for the masses.'⁵¹ The period under examination here marks the transition during which the reticent Victorian aristocracy became the public, glamorous (and histrionic) manifestation of the social and political elite. The emphasis on Society events within middle and working class papers helped to secure the role of Society as a social tool, and of the elite within society at large, assuring the recognition of the growing middle classes of the social hierarchy which made Society possible.⁵²

Seeing and being seen was an important aspect of the creation of the public idea of Society, and one of the most significant venues for this was London's parks, where the elite would flock twice a day during the Season, but where they could also be watched by those outwith the confines of upper-class sociability.⁵³ Lady Mabel Annesley remembered these promenades vividly from her childhood, including a detailed description of them in her autobiography:

Between five o'clock tea and dinner at eight, all fashionable London in the eighties and nineties was to be seen in Hyde Park. From Marble Arch to Knightsbridge the carriages rolled: the ducal barouche with high box seat and shallow body swinging from curved springs, the dowager's landau, the smart Victoria. High-stepping horses tossed their manes and champed their bits; their plated harness shone bright as the coachmen's silver buttons and cockaded hats.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, pp.23,33

⁵¹ Paul Cohen-Portheim, *England: The Unknown Isle* (London, 1930), pp.112-113

⁵² McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, p.34

⁵³ Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, p.28

⁵⁴ Annesley, *As the Sight is Bent*, p.14

Lady Mabel's memory of this colourful parade of wealth and privilege was particularly coloured by both the contrast of London's social elite with the 'lone work-worn figures against the grey sky and dense sombre greens of Ireland', and with the erosion of aristocratic privilege she would witness in the twentieth century. However, in the 1890s, Society was still operating primarily on those principles that had guided it for a century or more, and wealthy aristocrats were expected to display their style and wealth in the drawing rooms, parks, and theatres of the capital, where the boxes were aligned to facilitate the view of the other theatre-goers, rather than the stage.⁵⁵ Entertainment was a key element of the Season, but it was always secondary to the promotion of Society itself.

One of the aspects of aristocratic life that was being examined during these outings was appearance and especially dress, which provided both a very visible declaration of social status and personal style. As Diana Crane has asserted, fashion is 'one of the most visible markers of social status and gender, and therefore useful in maintaining or subverting symbolic boundaries.'⁵⁶ Fashion was an important tool used by the social elite of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and was a necessity in order to clearly signal status, wealth, and position within the swiftly fluctuating world of high society in the metropolis. Because the obligation of self-presentation was a crucial one for the elite, shopping was an important part of life in London. As both a means to acquire commodities that could declare status and as a form of active consumption, the act and the rewards of shopping performed double duty in declaring the financial power of the aristocracy. This, of course, was not new in the late nineteenth century: shopping became a substantial and important aspect of the lives of women in Georgian London, and was well established as a leisure activity by the mid-nineteenth century.⁵⁷ As Mica Nava has recognised, a crucial part of the shopping experience was 'the enhancement of social status and identity which derived from the consumption of intricately coded possessions and styles,'⁵⁸ and it was in the understanding and development of this code that the female leaders of Society played the greatest part.

⁵⁵ Leslie, *The Marlborough House Set*, p.103

⁵⁶ Diana Crane, *Fashion and its Social Agendas: Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing* (Chicago, 2000), p.1

⁵⁷ Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter* (New Haven, 1998), p.76

⁵⁸ Mica Nava, "Modernity's Disavowal: Women, the City, and the Department Store", in Pasi Falk and Colin Campbell, *The Shopping Experience* (London, 1997), p.64

The 3rd countess of Kilmorey was one of these social leaders, and she left an illuminating record of her sartorial acquisitions in the 1880s and 1890s. Lady Kilmorey bought most of her clothes in Paris, where she travelled annually to be fitted for the latest fashions by such eminent professionals as Charles Frederick Worth, recognised as the first fashion designer, and the most eminent *couturier* of the time.⁵⁹ The patterns of Lady Kilmorey and other aristocratic women's shopping demonstrate that while London may have been their home (or one of many homes), Paris was the home of fashion. Women like Mary Catherine Nicolson, sister of the marchioness of Dufferin, took advantage of visits there to purchase their clothes,⁶⁰ and fashionable aristocratic women could be expected to spend around £50 for each dress at an elite London dressmaker's, and more at an institution like Worth's, where Lady Kilmorey spent 4891 francs (approximately £195) on the various components of two dresses in 1893. As a change of pace, in 1893-4 Lady Kilmorey purchased her clothes for the winter and autumn from P. Griner, a dressmaker in London. Monsieur Griner was obviously keen to make up for his distance from the presumed capital of ladies' fashion: he printed his bills in French, though they came from his address on Regent Street. Lady Kilmorey more regularly purchased her accessories in London, especially her shoes, which were made for her by Hook, Knowles and Company, specialists in ladies' boots and shoes. The company provided Lady Kilmorey with both formal and informal shoes, ranging from sensible Oxford brogues in calf-leather to her more elaborate footwear: green with red satin heels; plush-lined, quilted blue satin mules with Louis XV heels; or velvet slippers in 'lurid blue'.⁶¹

The place of the aristocracy as the sole arbiters of taste and aesthetic judgment was increasingly threatened by the expanding consumer market of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By the 1880s, the aristocracy had developed the means by which they could distinguish between the tailored creations of their own class and the ready-to-wear ensembles of the less well-to-do. Fashion, and its swiftly changing intricacies, was a frequent topic for letters, especially for those aristocrats who were away from the centre of elite fashion in London, either on their estates or abroad. When fashion was the tool used to distinguish between the inner and the outer circles, power-hungry aristocrats could not afford

⁵⁹ Diana de Marly, *Worth: Father of Haute Couture* (London, 1980), p.29

⁶⁰ PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/M/2/39. Harriot, marchioness of Dufferin, to Lady Hermione Blackwood, 1892

⁶¹ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/H/5/1-8. Bills to Lady Kilmorey, 1885-1896, 1910-1911

to be seen in out-dated fashions.⁶² Within those families who held leading places in Imperial government, this seems to have been most crucial. By declaring themselves *au courant* with the stylistic influences of London, families of diplomats like the 1st marquess of Dufferin and the 4th earl of Belmore were assuring the Westminster government of their continued relevance as leaders of Society outside Britain. These distinctions were subtle, and their nuances may have been lost on the *parvenus* who haunted the exterior of London Society.

Changes in fashion during this period were swift, and the silhouette of feminine fashion saw an enormous alteration in the years between 1870 and 1925.⁶³ The rise of a figure like Worth in the second half of the nineteenth century demonstrated an enormous change in the fashion of the time, and one that would have affected the sartorial autonomy of women like Lady Kilmorey significantly. The role that Worth carved for himself, first as the dressmaker of the French court under the Empress Eugenie, and then as the couturier of the entire European elite, was different from that which had been held by others in his profession, even famous *modistes* such as Rose Bertin, celebrated dressmaker to Marie Antoinette. Whereas traditionally dressmakers were led by the requests of their clients, by the 1880s, Worth himself was dictating what the fashionable woman wore.⁶⁴ And though Worth worked out of Paris, and had established himself first as a fixture of the court of the Second Empire, his rise to sartorial supremacy from an apprenticeship in drapery in London also demonstrates the increased authority of British fashion on the clothing of the European elite. As the twentieth century approached, the influences on fashion expanded, as is evidenced by the increased diversity of source material used in women's journals such as *The Queen* and *The Gentlewoman*. More traditional influences, such as the French court and the clothes of fashionable royals like Princess Alexandra, vie for space with records of costumes from the theatre and the day clothes of actresses, style notes from European capitals such as Vienna or spa towns like Baden-Baden, and in depth notes and illustrations of the special occasion attire of elite members of society. Peeresses like the countess of Kilmorey, Theresa, Lady Londonderry, and Lady Gladys Hamilton (later countess of Wicklow) made frequent

⁶² PRONI, Belmore Papers, D/3007/1/4. Kate Gladstone to Lady Belmore, n.d.

⁶³ See Iris Brooke and James Laver, *English Costume of the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1929). The tracing of the changes in fashionable attire for men and women is not within the scope of this chapter, although fashion in Ireland as a whole, and elite fashion as a reflector of social history during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, has received very little treatment by historians.

⁶⁴ Philip Mansel, *Dressed to Rule: Royal and Court Costume from Louis XIV to Elizabeth II* (London, 2005), p.121

appearances in these magazines, increasingly cementing their role as arbiters of fashion as the nineteenth century became the twentieth.⁶⁵

The ability of these women to negotiate the trends of elite fashion during this time required an enormous investment of both time and capital. Throughout the nineteenth century, the sheer number of dresses required by fashionable women was immense: by the turn of the twentieth century a woman moving in Society would customarily change five or six times a day, more than her ancestor would have done at the turn of the nineteenth century.⁶⁶ The apparent increase in simplicity of the gowns of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries belied the actual complexities of the garments: “there is as much work nowadays in one gown as there was years ago in twenty,” claimed *The Queen* in just after the turn of the twentieth century.⁶⁷ The acquisition of stylish and carefully constructed pieces of clothing was not the only arena in which the symbols of status were used by the leaders of Society. Mica Nava has theorised that because it was primarily women who did the shopping within both upper and middle class households, it was, in fact, these women who developed ‘taxonomies of signification’, thereby directing the visual representation of status within elite society.⁶⁸

This taxonomy would have applied to the range of luxury goods purchased by aristocratic women, such as jewellery, cosmetics, home-wares, and even hairdressing, which was yet another time- and finance-consuming pursuit of Lady Kilmorey, who had her hair styled by Jules Launay of Regent Street, in the 1880s.⁶⁹ The controls over the appearance of young women applied particularly to clothing, for which there was a series of evolving rules for both day and evening, but also to hair-dressing, which was frequently discussed in letters among the women of the Dufferin family.⁷⁰ Lady Hermione Blackwood mentioned the

⁶⁵ Early twentieth century style journals such as *The Queen* depended on the whims of ‘seasonality’ as much as they do today, and by 1900, the fashion year was structured similarly, including sales in London in January and July, and in depth fashion spreads in the magazines in September and April.

⁶⁶ Mansel, *Dressed to Rule*, p.122

⁶⁷ *The Queen*, 25 April 1901

⁶⁸ Nava, “Modernity’s Disavowal”, p.66

⁶⁹ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/H/5/1-8. Bills to Lady Kilmorey, 1885-1896, 1910-1911. Also see PRONI, Rossmore Papers, T/2929/29/563, for a record of Lady Rossmore’s cosmetics purchases, c. 1883. Note that not only ladies had requirements for their physical appearance; gentlemen also made substantial and regular purchases at the chemists. T/2929/29/560,563,582, 590. Bills to Lord Rossmore from his chemists, 29 July to 9 August 1884

⁷⁰ Malleeson, *After Ten Years*, p.51; PRONI, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/M/2/25,27. Hariot, Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava to Lady Hermione Blackwood, 18, 29 June 1890

discomfort of the hairstyles that were *de rigueur* in the 1890s in letters to her brothers and sisters,⁷¹ but within the context of the debut of a young aristocrat, comfort was less important than presentation, and this included all aspects of feminine beauty, including hair, dress, and the preservation of the all-important Victorian complexion.⁷²

However, arguments for the pre-eminence of the feminine in the public sphere of shopping and fashion obscure the actual role fashion played in the lives of both men and women. To dress, and to be dressed, was not a demand placed only on the female of the species: gentlemen, or those who wished to be perceived as such, were also expected to fulfil certain sartorial demands, whether these were placed on them by their peers, by the expectations of a growing and watchful press, or by the swiftly-moving aesthetics of Society.⁷³ Trade magazines such as *Tailor and Cutter* claimed that to properly negotiate the gentlemanly requirement of three changes each day (for indoor day wear, outdoor or sporting day wear, and dinner or evening clothes), a man should have at least twenty suits for a week.⁷⁴ While it would be naive to take the recommendations of the tailor trying to make a sale as a standard guide for living, it does demonstrate that the social control of high society fashion extended to the male, as well as the female. Men like Derrick Westenra, 5th Lord Rossmore, would visit their London tailor regularly, not only to purchase new items, but also to make sure that those they already owned were in the best condition and at the height of fashion.⁷⁵ Other leisured men used shopping in ways that are more often associated with wealthy women: in his journal of 1874 to 1876 Henry Vane Tempest records his frequent Saturday shopping excursions both from his military barracks at Windsor and from the family home at Londonderry House. The frequent presence of his sister, Lady Alexandrina, on these shopping trips demonstrates that shopping was not necessarily simply a duty for the aristocrat, whether male or female: Lady Alexandrina and Lord Henry considered their

⁷¹ Public Records Office of Northern Ireland, Blackwood Papers, D/1231/L/5/3. Lady Hermione Blackwood to Lady Helen Blackwood, n.d.

⁷² Lord Ernest Hamilton, *Forty Years On* (London, 1922), p.5

⁷³ McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, p.34

⁷⁴ *Tailor and Cutter Magazine*, as quoted in Crane, *Fashion and its Social Agendas*, p.47

⁷⁵ PRONI, Rossmore Papers, T/2929/29/574. Bill to Lord Rossmore from his tailor, Jun-Jul 1884; T/2929/14/15. Bill to Lord Rossmore from Beale and Inman, Shirt-makers, Hosiers, and Outfitters, 131 & 132 New Bond Street, London, 24 May 1884; T/2929/29/571,574,581. Bills to Lord Rossmore from William Hatchard, 5 N. Audley Street, 31 May, Jun-Jul, Jul-Oct, 1884

excursions to the shops in London as a leisure activity, enjoying the trips much as they did rides in Hyde Park or outings to art galleries.⁷⁶

For many of the men in these families, the counterpart to the intricacies of the fashions of women in Society, and the reverse of the increasingly strict rules about appropriate business and city attire for men, was the military uniform. As Linda Colley has recognised, the great revocation of male fashion in the nineteenth century only went so far; even within the day-to-day clothes of the civilian, military inspiration was apparent, while the detailed, colourful, and eye catching attire of the troops played an important part in aristocratic society during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁷⁷ The close association between society and the 'smart regiments' continued well into the twentieth century,⁷⁸ and the role played by men in the military (who were, at Society events, therefore almost always men in military uniform) in elite life in London was substantial. The uniforms of the elite regiments of the British military held all the same weight of symbology as the simple white dress did for the debutante, carrying implications of authority, service, and active manliness, and acting as both a display of financial means and as a guarantor of social status and entrance.

Within the regiment itself, the role of the uniform was not played down during this period: as late as the 1960s Major R. Money Barnes asserted that 'history was often written in the little items of dress which might be unnoticeable to a civilian, but which meant much to a regiment.'⁷⁹ Shared dress was the physical manifestation of the collective ethos of the military group; the detail of this shared dress was the manifestation of the aristocratic and elite principles of display and invented tradition which became such an inherent part of the lives of the landed classes in the nineteenth century.⁸⁰ This culture was established among the upper classes early: the emphasis placed on display in the military corps at the public schools is made clear in the photograph albums of the Cole family, in which the pride taken by the

⁷⁶ PRONI, Theresa Londonderry Papers, D/2846/3/14/1. Diary of Henry Vane Tempest, 1874-6

⁷⁷ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven and London, 1992), p.187

⁷⁸ McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, p.33

⁷⁹ R. Money Barnes, *Military Uniforms of Britain and the Empire, 1742 to the present time* (London, 1960), p.10

⁸⁰ The conformation to a 'type' within the military may also be suggestive of the arguments of J.C. Flugel on narcissism and the specific range of menswear after about 1750. Because it was shared between all members of a specific group, the military uniform—glamorous, intricate, and flamboyant as it was—may represent something in-between the personal expression of individualised women's clothing and the uniformity of modern menswear that Flugel recognised as a requirement for the homosociality of the business, political, and club world of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (JC Flugel 'The Predominance of Male Homosociality'. In McNeil, *Fashion: The Twentieth Century to Today* (Oxford 2009))

sons of the 4th earl of Enniskillen in the intricate uniforms of the Eton Volunteer Corps from around the turn of the twentieth century is preserved. Shiny boots and brass buttons, piped trousers, decorative sashes, medals of promotion, and weaponry adorn boys aged between eleven and eighteen, presaging their involvement in the upper ranks of the British military.⁸¹ By the time these men reached adulthood, their integration within the military had changed, but the attention to these markers of history had not: around the same time, Lord Newry (later 4th earl of Kilmorey) recorded the dress of nine members of the Cavalry Squad at Hythe as painted by a colleague ('M.S.P.') in watercolour.⁸² His own 1st Life Guards' red tunic, blue trousers, and white and gold embellishments are echoed in the dress of his fellows from the 2nd Life Guards and 6th Dragoons, while the dark blue of the tunics of the Hussars and Lancers within the troop are heavily embellished with gold frogging and braiding and contrasting shirt-fronts. The hats of every man, from the tall and erect Lord Newry to the diminutive Lieutenant Hewitt, are intricate, individualistic, and further contradict any assertion of male abandonment of the ideas and principles of fashion: horse-hair tails, feathered plumes, and coloured brushes adorn headgear in a multiplicity of shapes and colours. These men, rather than renouncing fashion and its intricacies and requirements, obviously relished it, and embraced all the social and financial implications of their attire.

One of the aspects of Society to which the strict rules of fashion contributed was the formality of elite life in London. Anita Leslie has categorised aristocratic life as 'casual in the country, splendidly formal in London',⁸³ and the complexity of the fashion requirements of the elite are reflected in the social strictures that went along with them. Elite life was confusing enough that even aristocrats raised in these environments needed guidance within this world, as is evidenced by the 'tips' sent to Lord Newry as he was making his mark on Society as a young member of the Cavalry Squad, by his father, the 3rd earl of Kilmorey, in 1902. This letter addresses two subjects of vast complexity: the acceptance and refusal of social invitations, and the labyrinthine rules of addressing aristocratic members of Society by their various titles. Lord Kilmorey's recommendations are specific and useful (he instructs his son to always address the outside of envelopes using the full title of the addressee), but he writes with affection and humour, primarily depending on his son's excellent conduct to see

⁸¹ PRONI, Enniskillen Papers, D/1702/11/6. Photo Album, 1899-1902

⁸² PRONI Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/F/8. Watercolour by M.S.P. enclosed in journal of Lord Newry, August, 1905

⁸³ Leslie, *The Marlborough House Set*, p.18

him through his confusing first season. 'We all know what good manners you have (which I hope you will never lose) and that you are straight and all a gentleman should be,' he writes fondly. 'Your drawback is your youth, but you will be getting the better of that daily.'⁸⁴

Ultimately, these rules and regulations offered something more than hoops for young aristocrats to jump through: the formality and structure made elite Society predictable and well-regulated, both stabilising and facilitating the structure of London's social world. A significant part of this closely regulated set of movement was the system of calling, in which the elite could make or break introductions using a single piece of beautifully embossed card. The purpose of the calling system was clear: introduction within London Society depended on previous acceptance by the coterie of elite leaders. A newcomer within society would arrive at the home of an established Society hostess in the afternoon during the appropriate calling hours, which were often advertised in the press.⁸⁵ The visitor would present their card to the retainer who opened the door, who would then bring it to the lady of the house. If the caller was welcome and already an acquaintance of the hostess, she would be escorted by the servant into one of the reception rooms. If the caller had arrived at an inconvenient time or had not already been introduced, he or she would be told that the lady was not at home. The responsibility for pursuing the acquaintance then lay with the hostess, who would either call during the newcomer's advertised 'At Home', or would leave their own card with the staff at the newcomer's house. This card would then operate as an invitation to call again. If the acquaintance were undesirable, the hostess would do nothing, thereby 'cutting' the newcomer without any unnecessary social awkwardness.

While visiting or receiving visitors, women were operating in the midst of London's most powerful circuit of knowledge, and during the calls they were able to collect information that could colour the political, economic, marital, and social decisions of their family. The calling card of Elizabeth, countess of Caledon, preserved accidentally among a file of papers, is therefore a relic of aristocratic social ammunition: the simple cream card stock is embossed in black with 'Countess of Caledon' in the centre, her London address scripted at the bottom right corner.⁸⁶ Just as her dress or equipage would, the quality of the

⁸⁴ PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/D/73/1-5. Letters to Lord Newry from his parents, c. 1893-1912. This letter was probably written around 1903.

⁸⁵ Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, p.62

⁸⁶ PRONI, Caledon Papers, D/2433/B/22/1. Miscellaneous papers, primarily of the 4th countess of Caledon

paper and lettering would speak volumes about Lady Caledon's value as a social connection, opening or closing the most important doors in London Society. Lady Florence Cole made the importance of the intricacies of introduction through cards clear in a letter to her sister Lady Kathleen from Italy in the 1890s. Lady Florence and the Countess of Enniskillen had been travelling in elite Italian and ex-patriot British Society on the Continent, and were being given a crash course in the differences in introduction etiquette in European Society. 'In this place one has to leave cards on everybody 40 times a day as far as I can make out,' Lady Florence writes, requesting that her sister will send them more cards to replenish their diminished supply.⁸⁷

As early as the seventeenth century, Dubliners had developed a critical and formal attitude to matters of dress, figure, and display. Casual dress, especially among the viceregal circle, was likely to cause offense, and Toby Barnard has suggested that this particularity may have been the means by which residents of the Irish capital staved off accusations of provinciality from regulars of London Society.⁸⁸ This high formality remained the protocol of the Dublin Season well into the twentieth century, especially for events at the Castle; the formality of fashion worn to levees and drawing rooms at Dublin Castle attest to the intricacies of these events, and matched or surpassed that expected for contemporary gatherings in London.⁸⁹ Even as many of the elite considered the Drawing Rooms to be too crowded, and too common, the aristocracy who attended continued to engage with the rules of the game.

The aristocracy of the north of Ireland interacted with Society and the events of the Season as did their British counterparts, and this engagement was an aspect of their integration within the cultural unionism of the landed classes within the United Kingdom at this time. An additional aspect of this integration was actually physical, and this occurred in large measure (for men) within the clubs which increasingly populated London's social scene through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Because they catered to a specific and relatively narrow membership, the club was able to reflect the aristocrat's interests far better than could be achieved in the aristocratic home, where the needs of the individual were

⁸⁷ PRONI, Enniskillen Papers, D/1702/12/44/2. Lady Florence Cole to Lady Kathleen Cole, n.d.

⁸⁸ Toby Barnard, *Making the Grand Figure: Lives and Possessions in Ireland, 1641-1770* (New Haven, 2004), p.1

⁸⁹ Bence-Jones, *Twilight of the Ascendancy*, p.52

always subsumed by the needs of the group, and where the mark of ancestors past and descendants to come laid heavily on the physical and psychological furniture of the home. Within the club, both personal interest and group loyalties were reflected, and most men belonged to more than one institution able to cater to their various needs. The club additionally provided a congenially homosocial environment especially suited to those men who had been raised within the context of the public school.⁹⁰ Terence Dooley has also recognised this, writing that ‘clubs acted as an extension of public school life, enhancing social status and exposing members to influential contacts.’⁹¹ However, as Ross McKibbin has recognised, the club was an intrinsic aspect of Society, and the predominantly masculine realms of the upper ranks of the military, as well as the area around St. James, were closely involved with Society at large.⁹²

The most patronised establishment among the aristocracy of Ulster was the Carlton Club, the centre of Conservative political and social life. Eighteen representatives of the Abercorn, Belmore, Caledon, Dufferin, Erne, Kilmorey, Leslie, Londonderry and Rossmore families were members of the Carlton between 1870 and 1925, and it was here that these gentlemen would have encountered their friends, relations, and associates, on a daily or near-daily basis when they were in London. The integration of party leaders with regular Conservative Party members at the Carlton was praised by Escott during the 1880s, and he felt that this situation fostered a congenial equality within the Party that could not be matched by its rivals.⁹³ Within the members of the Ulster Party, club membership was particularly high, as Alvin Jackson has recognised, with an average two club memberships per party member. The Carlton Club was the most popular among this group.⁹⁴ That the membership from among these families is predominantly among those individuals who held, or were due to inherit, peerages reflects less a preference within the Club for title holders than the decidedly political outlook of the Carlton Club’s membership: the heads of these families were the most likely members of their families to pursue political careers, and it was this which tied them to the Carlton Club.

⁹⁰ Amy Milne-Smith, ‘“A Flight to Domesticity? Making a Home in the Gentlemen’s Clubs of London, 1880-1914’, *Journal of British Studies* 45 (October 2005), p. 803

⁹¹ Terence Dooley, *The Decline of the Big House in Ireland* (Dublin, 2001), p.63

⁹² McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, p.33

⁹³ Escott, *Society in London*, p.92

⁹⁴ Jackson, *The Ulster Party*, p.73

Within the ranks of the aristocracy of Ulster, the popularity of the Carlton could not be matched, but other clubs also received a great deal of patronage from these peers, in particular the Traveller's Club, which was known for exclusiveness and 'solemn tranquility', and where the 2nd and 3rd earls of Dartrey (conspicuously missing from the members list of the Carlton Club, along with the politically Liberal Dufferin family) could be found.⁹⁵ The club's rule that all members must have travelled at least 500 miles from London hardly dissuaded such seasoned travellers as the 1st marquess of Dufferin and Ava and his son Lord Terence Blackwood (the 2nd marquess), or Sir John Leslie, 1st Baronet. Lord Dufferin and Sir John were also both members of the Athenaeum, which reflected their shared artistic tastes. The membership of the Athenaeum was small among this group, and creativity seems to have more frequently given way to activity: the Turf Club claimed six members from these families to the Athenaeum's two, or the Garrick Club's single aristocratic Ulsterman, the 3rd earl of Kilmorey.⁹⁶

The popularity of club membership within this circle was true in Dublin, as well as London, where Ireland's elite traditionally had held membership to one of the two main clubs on Sackville Street and Kildare Street, and where membership was similarly dictated by social standing.⁹⁷ The secondary nature of Dublin's society among these families of is demonstrated by their more limited club membership in Dublin, however: over the fifty-five year of this study, only eight members of these aristocratic families held memberships at the Kildare or Sackville Street Clubs. Of the two, the Kildare Street Club was the more popular, claiming the membership of the 1st and 2nd earls of Dartrey, the 4th earl of Enniskillen, and Derrick, Lord Rossmore. The Sackville Street Club, on the other hand, had the patronage of the 2nd duke of Abercorn, the 4th earl of Caledon, and the 3rd earl of Kilmorey. The membership of these individuals, however, seems to point to the direction that these clubs were heading during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: all eight of these men were from the older generation included within this study (born before the commencement of the study in 1870), demonstrating that for the elite of the north of Ireland, the increased importance of unionist cultural ties and Unionist politics, and the decreased importance of Dublin as a political and cultural capital made membership at London clubs a greater priority.

⁹⁵ Barbara Tuchman, *The Proud Tower: A Portrait of the World Before the War, 1890-1914* (London, 1962), p.42

⁹⁶ For the most comprehensive information on the clubs of the aristocracy, see *Who's Who*, c. 1897-1960

⁹⁷ Bence-Jones, *Twilight of the Ascendancy*, p.53

This may have been related to the growth of an additional arena for club membership, which was the regional and provincial club, which increased in popularity among this group during this period, and may reflect the growing cultural emphasis within these families on an increased regional, as well as supranational, identity. The 4th earl of Belmore and two of his sons (who would succeed him as 5th and 6th earls) were connected with a remarkable array of provincial establishments, including the Fermanagh Club, in Enniskillen, the Tyrone County Club, in Omagh, the Northern Counties Club, in Londonderry, and the Armagh Club. The 6th earl of Belmore was also a member of the Ulster Club, located in Belfast, which had previously claimed the 1st marquess of Dufferin and Ava and the 3rd earl of Kilmorey as members by the time Belmore joined. The Ulster Club was, however, the only provincial club patronised by members of these families other than the Belmores. Jackson has suggested that the expansion of the Ulster Club was at the expense of Dublin's Kildare Street Club,⁹⁸ reflecting a shift in the priorities of these families during the late nineteenth century.

Scholars have observed the nineteenth and early twentieth century aristocrat increasingly fleeing the elite residence for their clubs, an aspect of life in London that alarmed contemporary supporters of the idealised Victorian family which Amy Milne-Smith has referred to as a 'flight to domesticity.'⁹⁹ Milne-Smith sees the use of the elite home as a Society arena as preventing the growth of domesticity in this arena, and theorises that gentlemen sought, and found, this idealistic notion within the alternative space of their clubs. For men, club life was a crucial aspect of the urban existence, and one that reflected very clearly their positions in both the social and economic worlds. Within the club, tradition and stability ruled, and restrictions were relished by the predominantly conservative Club Man.¹⁰⁰ Within the club, the old order of the aristocratic Golden Age continued, and places of class, gender, and status were static, guaranteed by rules of selection and exclusivity.¹⁰¹ According to Leonore Davidoff, 'The club provided the same kind of social protection as the private home, without the rigid formality of etiquette imposed by women or the financial burden of upkeep,'¹⁰² an element of club life which may have been increasingly important as the

⁹⁸ Jackson, *The Ulster Party*, p.73

⁹⁹ Milne-Smith, 'A Flight to Domesticity?', pp.796-818

¹⁰⁰ Ralph Nevill, *London Clubs: Their History and Treasures* (London, 1911), p.136

¹⁰¹ Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, p.24

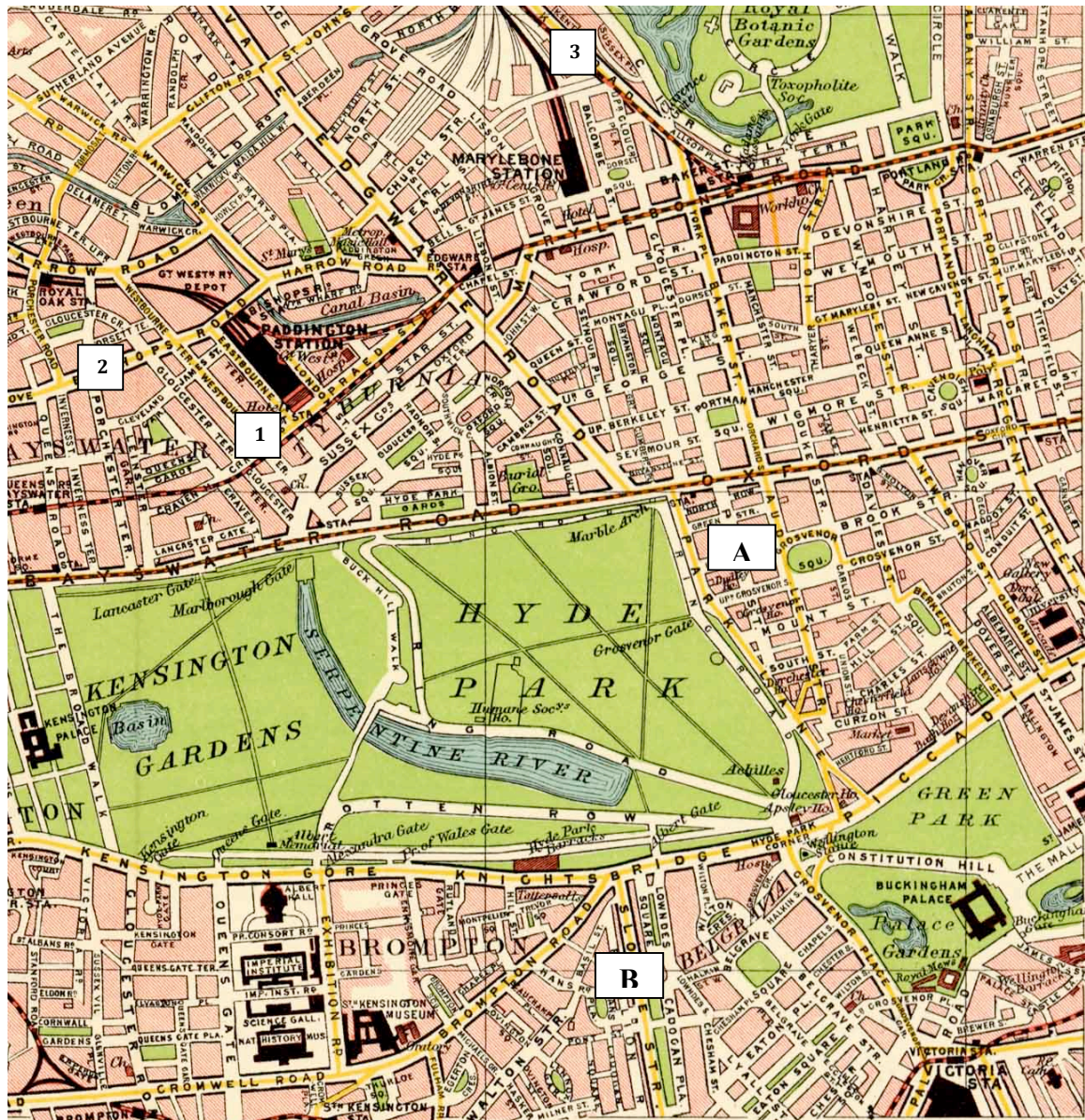
¹⁰² Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, p.24

aristocracy struggled to keep homes in the metropolis and the elite took advantage of the club as residence, as well as comfort zone.

Ralph Nevill claimed that while in the early nineteenth century about 1,200 gentlemen were members of some form of club, by the 1910s, upwards of 200,000 members were in existence.¹⁰³ While most of these clubs were aimed at the middle and upper middle class gentleman, club membership among the aristocracy of Ulster remained very high. The popularity of clubs during this period is one of the clearest indicators of the alternative means used by the elite to achieve the formalisation of Society during a period of rapid social flux. It was particularly within these institutions—homosocial, structured, and elite—that the sense of community that the aristocracy had been fostering for generations could be most easily rehabilitated, best preserving the core of aristocratic Society well into the twentieth century.

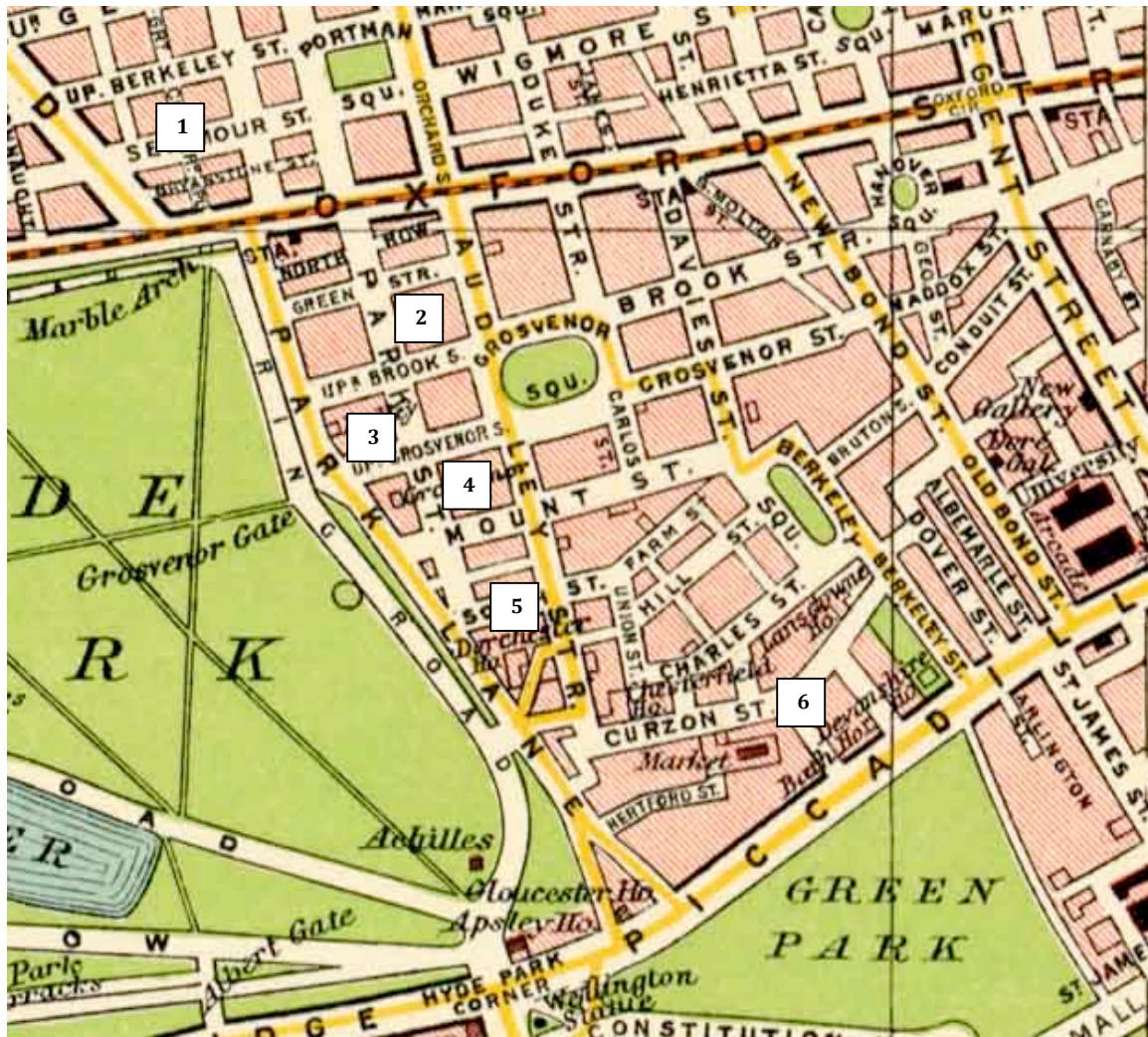
This chapter has examined three aspects of the lives of peers from the north of Ireland within the metropolitan environment, primarily in London, but also, to some extent, in Dublin, which formed a secondary arena for forging the elite community for Ireland's aristocracy. The principles of society, such as presentation, formality, the physical boundaries of the aristocratic ghetto, and the elite and exclusive nature of social entertainment, constricted and guided social interaction within Society for these families. These principles were also used, developed, and adapted to help the leaders of Society, including the aristocracy of the north of Ireland, to reinforce the concepts which supported their cultural world, and to alter their patterns of living in order to keep pace with the changes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, the principles of exclusion had changed by the early twentieth century, and more and more, the aristocracy of Ulster was mixing not only with the landed elite and the most acceptable members of the plutocracy, but also with the socially-powerful artistic, literary, and media elite. While reins of political power had largely slipped from their hands, they still held and continued to foster, social power through their ability to bring together and interact with the most notable elements of society.

¹⁰³ Nevill, *London Clubs*, p.157



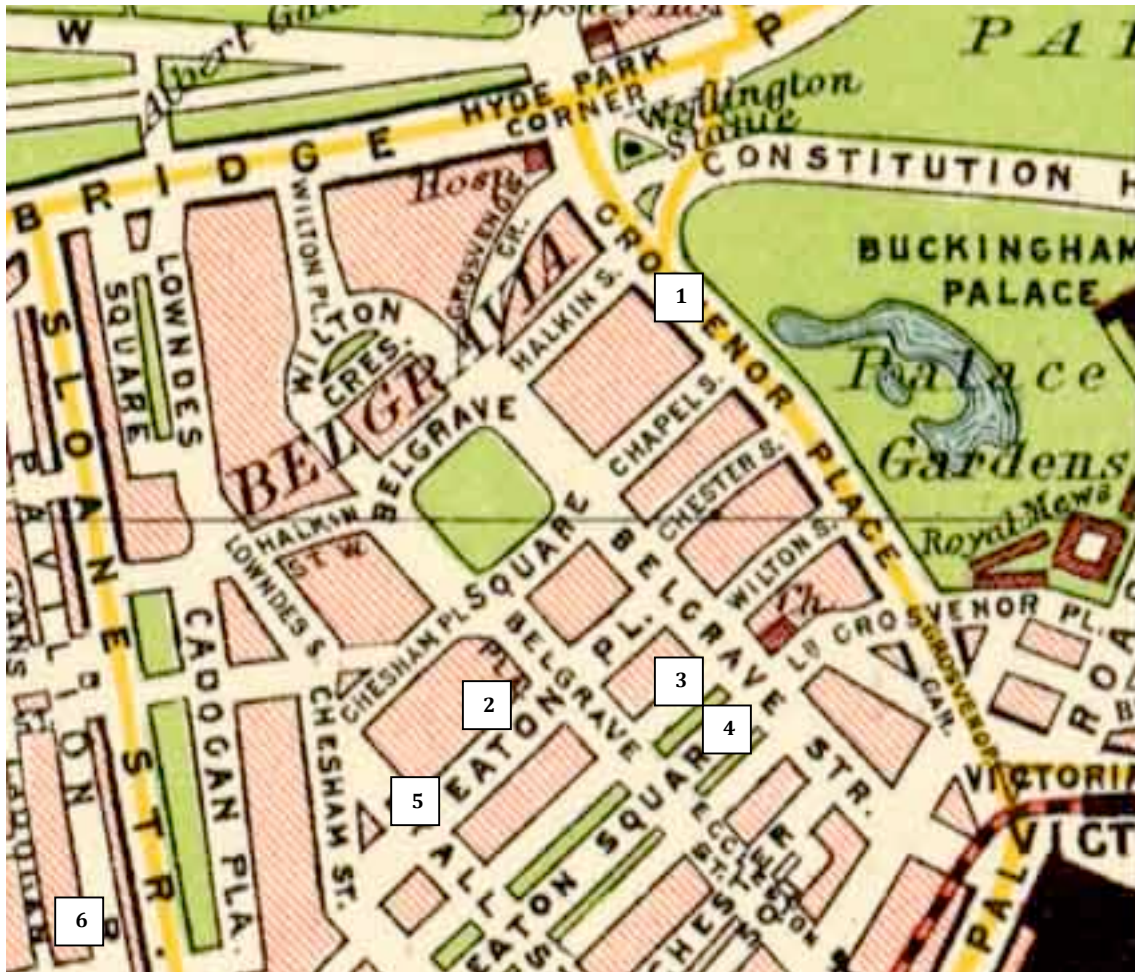
London's West End, including Mayfair (A) and Belgravia (B), and the homes of the:

- Leslies, Talbot Square (1)
- Leslies, Westbourne Terrace (2)
- Annesleys, Regent's Park (3)



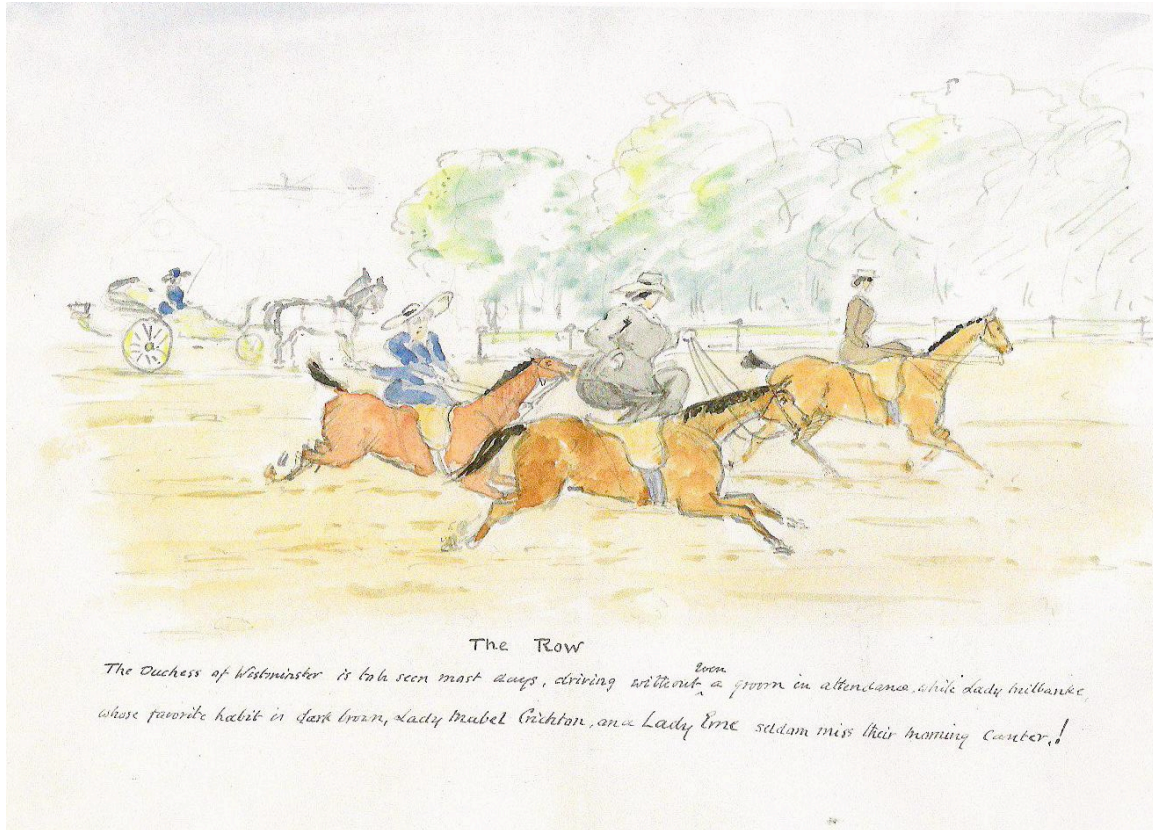
The homes of Mayfair, 1870-1925

- 1- Annesley, Great Cumberland Place
- 2- Abercorn (Hampden House), Green Street
- 3- Londonderry (Londonderry House), Park Lane
- 4- Abercorn, Park Street
- 5- Kilmorey, Aldford Street
- 6- Dartrey, Curzon Street



The homes of Belgravia, 1870-1925

- 1- Kilmorey, Grosvenor Place
- 2- Rossmore, Belgrave Place
- 3- Erne, Upper Belgrave Street
- 4- Kilmorey, Upper Belgrave Street
- 5- Belmore, Eaton Place
- 6- Kilmorey, Cadogan Square



'The Row', a watercolour by Lady Mabel Crichton, c.1890s. The caption reads: 'The Row: The Duchess of Westminster is seen most days driving without even a groom in attendance, while Lady Millbanke, whose favourite habit is dark brown, Lady Mabel Crichton, and Lady Erne seldom miss their morning canter!' PRONI, Erne Papers, D/1939/27/23

P. Griner
 41, George Street, Portman Square. W
 Londres 28 Juin 1894
 A Comtesse de Kilmorey Doit

1893			
Décembre	7	Robe en velours rubis doublé en tulle	6 6
1894			
Janvier	11	Jupe en tulle noir garnie attention et tulle en velours grasse	12 12
	15	Blouse en tulle noire fleur et noir	3 3
	24	Four noir arrange en jupe en tulle apale	10
Février	14	Corset en tulle jansée	4 4
			22 16

P. Griner

Bill from P. Griner, couturier, for the Countess of Kilmorey, 1894. Despite the fact that the dressmaker's establishment is located on George Street, Portman Square, Griner acknowledges the dominance of Paris in the fashion world by sending all bills in French. PRONI, Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/H/5/1-8



The Cavalry Squad at Hythe, August, 1905. Watercolour by M.S.P. enclosed in journal of Lord Newry. PRONI Kilmorey Papers, D/2638/F/8

Conclusion

In 1926 London Society flocked to the Royal Academy to see a memorial retrospective of the paintings of John Singer Sargent. Among the visitors to the show were peers from the north of Ireland, some of whom, like the Londonderrys, had loaned their own pieces for exhibition.¹ Sargent had died in April of the previous year, and the memorial exhibitions began almost immediately in London, New York, and Boston.² Yet even before his death Sargent's work was being viewed as out of step with the post-war generation: according to the critic Roger Fry, Sargent's work was 'wonderful indeed, but most wonderful that this wonderful performance should ever have been confused with that of an artist.'³ In the eyes of Fry and other critics, Sargent's work was incompatible with the currents of art and literature of the interwar years, and it is true that his works of the 1920s were imbued with that combination of pomp and psychology which had characterised his portraiture early in the twentieth century. Neither Sargent, nor his paintings, were of the interwar generation, however, and this was clearly demonstrated in the 1926 exhibition, which highlighted all of the nostalgic yearning of the elite for that most-recently created Golden Age, situated in the certainty of the pre-war years. According to Kenneth McConkey:

It encouraged reflections of a deeper kind upon a whole world which had passed. Through the eyes of the 1920s' commentators it was blinded by supreme self-assurance and its own sense of unshakable prosperity. In the 1920s Edwardian culture seemed vacuous; its social butterflies had vanished in the Great War.⁴

The writing of the elite at this time, especially in the rush of memoirs published between the two wars, echoes this feeling. Viewing the world through the prism of art, some had been able to see the inevitability of the change even before the Great War, as J.B. Priestley has written of the Edwardians at the Grafton Galleries in 1910, who sensed that 'the whole world

¹ H. Montgomery Hyde, *Londonderry House and its Pictures* (London, 1937), p.51

² Elizabeth Prettejohn, *Interpreting Sargent* (London, 1998), p. 77

³ Roger Fry, 'J.S. Sargent as Seen at the Royal Academy Exhibition of His Works, 1926, and in the National Gallery', *Transformations* (London, 1926), p.4

⁴ Kenneth McConkey, *Memory and Desire: Painting in Britain and Ireland at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (London, 2002), p.103

was being undermined and may crumble at any moment'.⁵ Priestley's interpretation of the Edwardian attitude adheres to an idea of an event of destruction, but the picture given by the evidence of aristocratic life in Ulster throughout this period is one of gradual change and adaptation to that change, rather than a cataclysmic shift to ruin. Events in 1910, 1912, 1914 and 1916 punctuated the alterations of the landed way of life, but the process was one of challenge and response by these families, who exhibited during this period a gradual alteration of their way of life, and an embrasure of the shifting modern world. By making alterations in the ways their family life, leisure, and patronage of the arts developed, this group of elite families retained, and even expanded, their social and cultural relevance in the face of the deliberate dismantling of their political and economic pre-eminence.

In concentrating solely on the political and economic changes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the historiography of the north of Ireland has neglected the wider examination of aristocratic society in the province during this time. The weight which has been given in the past to the exploration of the political and economic history has produced a significant body of work, which from the 1960s to the present day has illuminated a number of crucially important aspects of the lives of the elite in the north of Ireland in the years between the Famine and the Second World War.⁶ More recent work by Terence Dooley and Olwen Purdue has begun to examine the socio-economic fates of the elite in Ireland in the century after the Famine, but in concentrating on the exchange of land from the control of the elite to the tenantry, and the affect this exchange had on the finances of these families, these studies have left little space for the day-to-day lives of these families.⁷ Where the landed classes of Ireland are included within the work of British- and European-based historians of

⁵ J.B. Priestley, *The Edwardians* (London, 1970), p.145

⁶ See, for example: B.L. Solow, *The Land Question and the Irish Economy, 1870-1903* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), Lindsay J. Proudfoot, *Urban Patronage and Social Authority: The Management of the Duke of Devonshire's Towns in Ireland, 1764-1891* (Washington, D.C., 1995), and W.E. Vaughan, *Landlords and Tenants in Ireland, 1848-1904* (Dublin, 1984), on the economics on land management and ownership; K. Theodore Hoppen, *Elections, Politics, and Society in Ireland 1832-1885* (Oxford, 1984) and *Ireland since 1800: Conflict and Conformity* (London, 1989) on the social and political role of the landlord in rural society; Alvin Jackson, *The Ulster Party: Irish Unionists in the House of Commons, 1884-1911* (Oxford, 1989) and *Colonel Edward Saunderson: Land and Loyalty in Victorian Ireland* (Oxford, 1995) on the development of Ulster Unionism in the 1880s and 1890s; Diane Urquhart, *Women in Ulster Politics, 1890-1940: A History Not Yet Told* (Dublin, 2000) and *The Ladies of Londonderry: Women and Political Patronage* (London, 2007) on the role of women in the politics of Unionism, in particular.

⁷ Olwen Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland: Land, Power, and Social Elites, 1878-1960* (Dublin, 2009); Terence Dooley, *The Decline of Unionist Politics in Monaghan, 1911-1923* (Maynooth, 1988); Terence Dooley, *The Plight of the Monaghan Protestants, 1912-1916* (Dublin, 2000); Terence Dooley, *The Decline of the Big House in Ireland* (Dublin, 2001)

the aristocracy, such as that of David Cannadine and Peter Mandler, the treatment of the subject is generalised, and treated as secondary to, or dependent on, the larger Anglo-centric culture under examination in these works.⁸

This has created a well-developed picture of the political and economic decline of the landed classes, but this is an image that has been formed outside the context of their daily culture. Additionally, existing literature has offered little in terms of regional specifics for the north of Ireland, or cultural context for the world in which these families lived. While questions about land transfer, Unionism, and the changing relationship between landowner and tenant have been widely examined for this period, especially in the north of Ireland, there has been little scholarship on the wider culture of these landowning families, or on the relationship between this culture and the political and economic challenges faced by landlords between 1870 and 1925. The nature of Ulster's networks of landed kinship, the childrearing patterns of the aristocracy, the leisure practices of these families, and the patronage of the aristocracy in the fields of architecture and art have gone unexamined, creating a history of a regional elite that is overwhelmingly concerned with politics, economics, and religious conflict.

The research and analysis within this thesis has sought to redress this situation, offering a study of six aspects of aristocratic culture in Ulster between 1870 and 1925, and seeking to populate the existing political and economic landscape of Ulster's historiography with the actual families who led society in the province during this period. The aim of this thesis has been to begin to build a cultural context for the existing political and economic histories of the period, adding depth of scholarship on the daily practices and wider principles that guided elite lives and shaped the personal decisions of the landed classes of the north of Ireland. The focus of this study on the culture, rather than the politico-economic landscape, of the north of Ireland is intended to open a new field of study, both enlightening the leisure and family practices of the families within this case study, and offering scope for comparison with contemporary groups across the United Kingdom and Europe. Additionally, the research included within this thesis emphasises the usefulness within social and cultural history of source material previously collected with political history in mind, as well as highlighting the

⁸ F.M.L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1961); David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (London, 1992); Peter Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* (New Haven, 1997)

use of non-written materials, such as architecture, art, and photography, as a source for historical examination. The examination of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century elite cultural world in the north of Ireland is also intended to offer a contribution to the heritage industry, making a direct advance in the contextual environment in which built, painted, or written cultural heritage is presented in Northern Ireland.

The six topics under examination within this thesis have been selected as based on the offerings of primary source material and on the dearth of existing literature. Therefore, the detail within these chapters is largely new research, which brings to light the daily intricacies of elite life in the north of Ireland, and the collective interests and priorities of the aristocracy in the north of Ireland. For no subject is this truer than for the marriage networks of these twelve families. In the past, the marriage networks of the elite in the north of Ireland have been passed over as reflective simply of larger British or Irish trends in aristocratic marriage, or very lightly dealt with when certain alliances intersected with the political world of Unionism and land purchase. The ways in which marriage was contracted within this group of families demonstrates both the changes and the continuities of this period: while some aspects of this culture altered in the fifty-five years of this study, including the increased use of the media to promote romantic and glamorous ideas about the elite, and the growing inclusion of new types of families within the circle of elite kinship, these changes within the elite marriage network of the north of Ireland's elite families were nominal compared to what did not change during this period.

This chapter has looked at certain elements of the marriage networks of the elite of the north of Ireland, specifically examining the ways in which these families were able to continue a long-standing tradition of using marriage alliances as a means to strengthen bonds of kinship and community, as well as a means by which new forces within Society were integrated into the existing fabric of the elite world. The intention of this research has been to demonstrate that those small changes made by the aristocratic families of the north of Ireland to their marital patterns were conscious adaptations, embraced in order to better secure the place of the elite as leaders of society in Britain and Ireland. These changes included the consolidation of local influence through marriages made within their community or with cousins, the introduction of new means of support (both financial and social) from outside the United Kingdom, and the increased resort to the dissolution of marriages after the turn of the twentieth century, both through legal separation and through divorce. The analysis within this

research has additionally offered a more measured examination of the circumstances surrounding the introduction of foreign, particularly American, brides into the British and Irish elite, a subject which has attracted a great deal of attention (both scholarly and popular) for more than a century.⁹ However, no recent scholarly text exists that is dedicated to the role American women in British Society, either through their marital connections or their social influences as hostesses in the early twentieth century, leaving the treatment of this subject largely outdated. By looking in detail at the specific marriages which were made within the group of families used for this case study, this research has established that the influence these women had on elite British and Irish society was more subtle than has been traditionally assumed, as were the attractions of these ‘Dollar Princesses’, which were not always pecuniary.

Finally, this chapter has emphasised the role media coverage played in the promotion and execution of the elite wedding, a role that expanded as the nineteenth century became the twentieth. The increase of effort expended by these families to promote the marriages of their children within the press is indicative of the awareness of the elite of the growing power of the media, as well as demonstrative of the aristocratic consciousness of their role as purveyors of a public image of glamour, hierarchy, and conspicuous display. It is crucial to remember that in these instances, these families submitted their own copy to these papers, thereby intentionally courting the attention of the fashionable press. Style journals, like *The Queen* and *The Gentlewoman*, read by active members of Society and by the upwardly mobile middle classes alike, dedicated column inches to intricate discussions of the clothes, gifts, and guests on display at the weddings of Britain and Ireland’s premier families. For families from the north of Ireland, this coverage played an important role in family promotion, and families like the Londonderrys and the Kilmoreys were keen to emphasise their connections within the news coverage not only of their links to London Society in the form of royal guests, but also to their estates and tenantry. By the turn of the twentieth century, almost every elite wedding among these families was recognised by a column in these premier style journals, in which the families themselves delineated their social place,

⁹ The most recent, scholarly treatment of this subject has included: Ruth Brandon, *The Dollar Princesses* (London, 1980); and Elisabeth Kehoe, *The Titled Americans: Three American Sisters and the British Aristocratic World into Which They Married* (New York, 2004)

stupendous wealth, and powerful connections for the consumption of the middle and upper classes.

There is no secondary material on the upbringing and education of the aristocratic family in Ulster, possibly due to a wide-ranging assumption that the educational patterns of the elite in the north of Ireland would have differed little from those of families in the rest of Ireland, or, in fact, in Britain. Largely, this was true: young men and women raised in the country houses of the aristocracy in the north of Ireland were brought up largely in the same mould as their aristocratic cousins in Great Britain. Intentionally, the rearing of the children of Ulster's peers was overwhelmingly in the British mould: boys went to preparatory and public school in England (not Scotland), and if they continued on to university level (as a few did), they attended either Oxford or Cambridge, often selecting a university and college with pre-existing associations with their family. Young women were educated at home, often in the north of Ireland, although also with additional periods spent at other homes, especially those in London, or at the homes of family friends. Young women from these families followed their country house educations with a Society debut in London, rather than Dublin, although some were brought out at Dublin events or at country house parties as a sort of practise round before their official debuts.

As well as offering a confirmation of the intentionally 'unionist' direction of the schooling and family life of the elite in the north of Ireland, this chapter has offered a new perspective on some of the issues of childrearing among the aristocracy. In particular, this research offers a reassessment of the separateness of the education of young men at school: there is no doubt that boarding school did interrupt the patterns of family life, but this has been over-emphasised in much of the scholarly literature on the public school in the last thirty years.¹⁰ To place undue emphasis on an idea of public school separateness is to misunderstand the intentions of these families in sending their sons to these schools: while boarding school in the English Home Counties placed them far from the family home in the north of Ireland, these young men were, in fact, often near to family members in London, and to satellite branches of the family, including grandparents, aunts, uncles. Young men in attendance at Eton, Harrow, and the other recognised public schools were usually sent to the

¹⁰ See, for example: Jessica Gerard, *Country House Life: Family and Servants, 1815-1914* (Oxford, 1994); Rupert Wilkinson, *The Prefects: British Leadership and the Public School Tradition* (London, 1964); Anthony S. Wohl (ed.), *The Victorian Family: Structure and Stresses* (London, 1978)

same school as their brothers and cousins, and the same schools that their families had been tied to for generations, thereby solidifying this shared experience as a part of the elite community. Because of this, the school had a key role in integrating these young men both into the particular community of that school, as well as the wider community of the supra-national elite. This emphasis on the elite community, formed by families from four nations and centred on the imperial capital at London, was why an English education was crucial for the sons of aristocratic families from the north of Ireland: the act of educating these young men within the same mould as their English cousins was an active effort to help them to integrate within the supra-national community of Britain and Ireland's landed classes.

Elite patronage of architecture in the north of Ireland during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is an additional topic which has been under-explored, due both to the aesthetic preferences of the twentieth century for the forms and symbols of the Georgian period, as well as to the association made by historians of the Georgian period with construction, and the post-Famine period with retrenchment. As has been demonstrated within this research, this was not the case, and the analysis within this work has offered a collective re-examination of the patronage of the aristocracy of the north of Ireland in the face of the neglect and misapprehensions of twentieth-century architectural history. The period from the 1870s to the 1920s actually demonstrates a continuity of patronage from the eighteenth century, during which the aristocracy in the north of Ireland embraced architectural patronage, rebuilding when appropriate, but preferring, instead, the less intrusive redecoration, refurbishment, and renovation schemes which are characteristic of country house architecture in the north of Ireland during this period. The analysis within this chapter has looked at the work these families commissioned on their estates during this period, concentrating on architectural alterations and constructions, interior redesigns, and large-scale landscape gardening as manifestations of the awareness of these families of the important role their domestic surroundings played in their society. Historicism played an increasingly important role in the aesthetics of elite architecture during this period, and the popularity of Gothic Revival styles among the landed classes as whole was indicative of the wider intentions of the elite to continue their role as social and cultural leaders into the twentieth century. The changes made to the Irish homes of these families were demonstrative of the larger ideals that drove aristocratic culture during this period, and expressed their

interpretation of contemporary technological, social, and aesthetic change within the cultural world of the elite.

In exploring the role of elite collections of paintings and portraiture in the north of Ireland the active role of the aristocracy in altering the way they used their inherited legacies is further illustrated. Just as the elite in the north of Ireland took advantage of changes in the law which enabled them to recoup financial losses and repay debt through the sales of inherited estate lands, so these families took advantage of the provisions made by the government in the late nineteenth century to also use their artistic collections as commodities to help support the continuance of their way of life. Increasingly, those objects and styles seen as valuable by the elite in the past were used as commodities, especially where their value was recognised by those outside the landed classes. Elements from elite collections in the north of Ireland were sold during this period to buyers who often originated, or were based, outside the United Kingdom, and who funded their purchases from non-landed fortunes. This type of sale thereby stimulated a market for the art treasures of Britain and Ireland's country houses, establishing an international art market in the years after 1880. This research has explored how these families used this newly created avenue for sales to their benefit, actively seeking out buyers like Henry Clay Frick, and sacrificing portions of their inherited collections in order to pay death duties, taxes, and debts. The means by which the aristocracy in the north of Ireland managed their debts through art sales is indicative of their larger, and long-standing, dependence on a system of credit: rather than selling art or estate lands in order to finance renovations, pay off existing debts, or invest in non-landed commodities, these pieces were generally sold only when the debt was about to be collected. Because of this dependence on a variable system of credit, many families demonstrated much greater success than others in the profits from their sales. Those who sold exceptional pieces for high prices (as did the Abercorn family in the 1910s) were able to retain the bulk of their collection, while often those who did not sell any work when the market was particularly high in the 1910s actually ended up having to sacrifice much larger portions of their collections (in the case of the Kilmoreys, the entirety of the collection) to the debased market of the 1920s and 1930s.

The examination of the role of painted collections and portraiture within this work has also looked at the changing role of the artist-patron relationship, which was significantly altered in the years between 1870 and 1925. In many ways, the differences between the

relationships examined in this work can be attributed to the social range which existed even within this small sample of aristocratic families, and within the wider circle of artists who worked with them in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, the evidence exists to indicate that as the role of the landed classes was changing in this period, so was that of the artist. In the circle around such socially active peers as the 7th marquess and marchioness of Londonderry, this change was evident: the Londonderrys could count among their friends artists such as John Lavery, Philip de Laszlo, and William Orpen, as well as fellow northern Irish landowners like the Leslie's, the Dufferins, and the Rossmores. The way these peers, who remained at the forefront of Society and politics in the 1910s and 1920s, interacted with the artists who frequented the Londonderry salons was very different from the ways in which more traditional elite families, such as the Abercorns or Ernes, had interacted with artists they knew in the past. This change, like the alterations in the elite use of the media, in the way landed families forged marriage alliances, and in the means by which these families interacted with London Society, were indicative of the conscious recognition of some members of these families of the alterations within Society, and of their active decisions to adapt their patterns of living to retain relevance in the face of these changes.

The forms of leisure engaged in by these families during this period were, for the most part, those traditionally associated with the landed classes. These families actively worked to adapt these practises to reflect changes within Britain and Ireland's social, economic, and cultural spheres, thereby allowing them to retain relevance as cultural leaders within society. At home, the development of an extensive circuit of yachting and sailing activities, and of more limited arenas for shooting and hare coursing, acted as compensation for the lack of a successful equestrian sporting culture within Ulster, substituting lake- and sea-side society for the conviviality of the fox-hunt associated with much of the rest of Ireland during this period. While previous scholarship on the north of Ireland has dedicated a great deal of space to land management and the role of the estate in the economic life of the elite, the topic of leisure has been under-explored. The role of the horse as symbol for the Anglo-Irish has been assumed in the secondary literature on the Irish landed classes in their entirety, but this has been re-examined within this work, suggested a more nuanced picture of the local sporting culture. To claim that the horse did not play an important, even a central, role in the lives of these families is fallacious, but the research within this study suggests that in the face of a less successful horse-racing scene, and a non-existent fox-hunting scene, the landed classes

of the north of Ireland may have developed additional interests which, while hardly distinctive to their locality, acted to define their sporting schedules somewhat differently from those elsewhere in Ireland and Great Britain.

The particular local traditions and geography of the north of Ireland, and the influences of these forces on the sporting schedule of the local elite have previously only been explored in passing, and no sustained study of the role of these pastimes in the world of the Ulster elite has been undertaken.¹¹ In particular, the local sporting culture of yachting and sailing has been neglected, both as a manifestation of a regional interest, and as an influential pastime for the landed classes of Britain and Ireland. As such, those peers who were involved with this pursuit were connected not only within their own supranational community by a shared interest in this sport, but additionally tied to a wider community which included among its many passionate supporters American business magnates and European royalty. Like fox-hunting, which drew the rich and powerful to hunts in the south of England and in Ireland, and the shooting of game, which attracted businessmen and royalty alike to estates in the north of England and Scotland, the culture of yachting and sailing, which was encouraged and expanded on Lough Erne and along the coasts of County Down during this period, placed the elite of the area in a position to attract the wealthy, the influential, and the powerful to their estates for the purpose of a particular type of sport.

The development of a specific estate-based culture in the north of Ireland acts as a counterpoint to the social lives of these families within the metropolitan sphere: London was their cultural Mecca, and this preference for the imperial over the national or regional capitals reflected both the social priorities and ‘cultural unionism’ of these families, as well as their high income, exalted status, and international circle of kin and acquaintance. Within London Society, these families worked to maintain the exclusivity of their *milieu*, while additionally stimulating the interest of the upwardly mobile middle and working classes through press coverage and public events. In part, the goal of this research on the role of metropolitan society in the lives of these families has been to illuminate the double pull on these families of both their local and national communities, and of the wider, supra-national, ‘culturally unionist’ community of the landed classes of the United Kingdom as a whole. Politically, these Unionist peers were wedded to London as the capital; socially, they were equally

¹¹ In *Colonel Edward Saunderson* (pp.187-8) Alvin Jackson looks briefly at the political implications of yachting, but as these themes are tangential to his study, they are only sketchily explored.

wedded to London as their cultural capital, and this was the central location in which they were able to reaffirm both their place within the community of the landed classes, and their role as the historical leaders of British and Irish society.

The examination of the role of metropolitan leisure in the lives of these families within this work has centred on the ways in which titled families from the north of Ireland fit into the existing (and already widely studied) Society in London, and to a lesser extent, in Dublin. While the role of some of these families within London society has been examined,¹² the activities of these families have never been looked at collectively within metropolitan society, and nor have their pursuits been examined outside the realm of politics. Overwhelmingly, these families integrated themselves within the wider society of the wealthy and landed from across the United Kingdom, exhibiting little in terms of their cultural consumption in the capital that would mark them out as different from peers based in any other part of the United Kingdom. By and large, this seems to have been the intention of these families: rather than the provincial members of the Irish gentry who, according to Diane Urquhart, predominantly haunted the Dublin Season from January to March, the aristocratic families of the north of Ireland joined the ranks of the super-wealthy, powerful, well-connected families for whom the entertainments of Dublin merely acted as a pre-Season.

The preference of historians of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries for the political and economic, rather than the social and cultural, history of the landed classes of the north of Ireland has led to an imbalance in the treatment of history of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Over the last thirty years, the material and cultural history of Ireland in the eighteenth century has received a great deal of attention from historians such as Toby Barnard, Maxine Berg, and Anthony Malcomson, but similar attention has not been forthcoming among the historical community for the period after the Great Famine. This work, which has looked at six previously-neglected aspects of the culture of the aristocracy in the north of Ireland between 1870 and 1925, has begun to redress this, offering a picture of the family life, leisure patterns, and artistic and architectural patronage of twelve aristocratic families. The fifty-five years included within this study have, in the past, been characterised as a time of decline for these families. However, the research within this work has alternately

¹² See, in particular, Urquhart, *The Ladies of Londonderry*

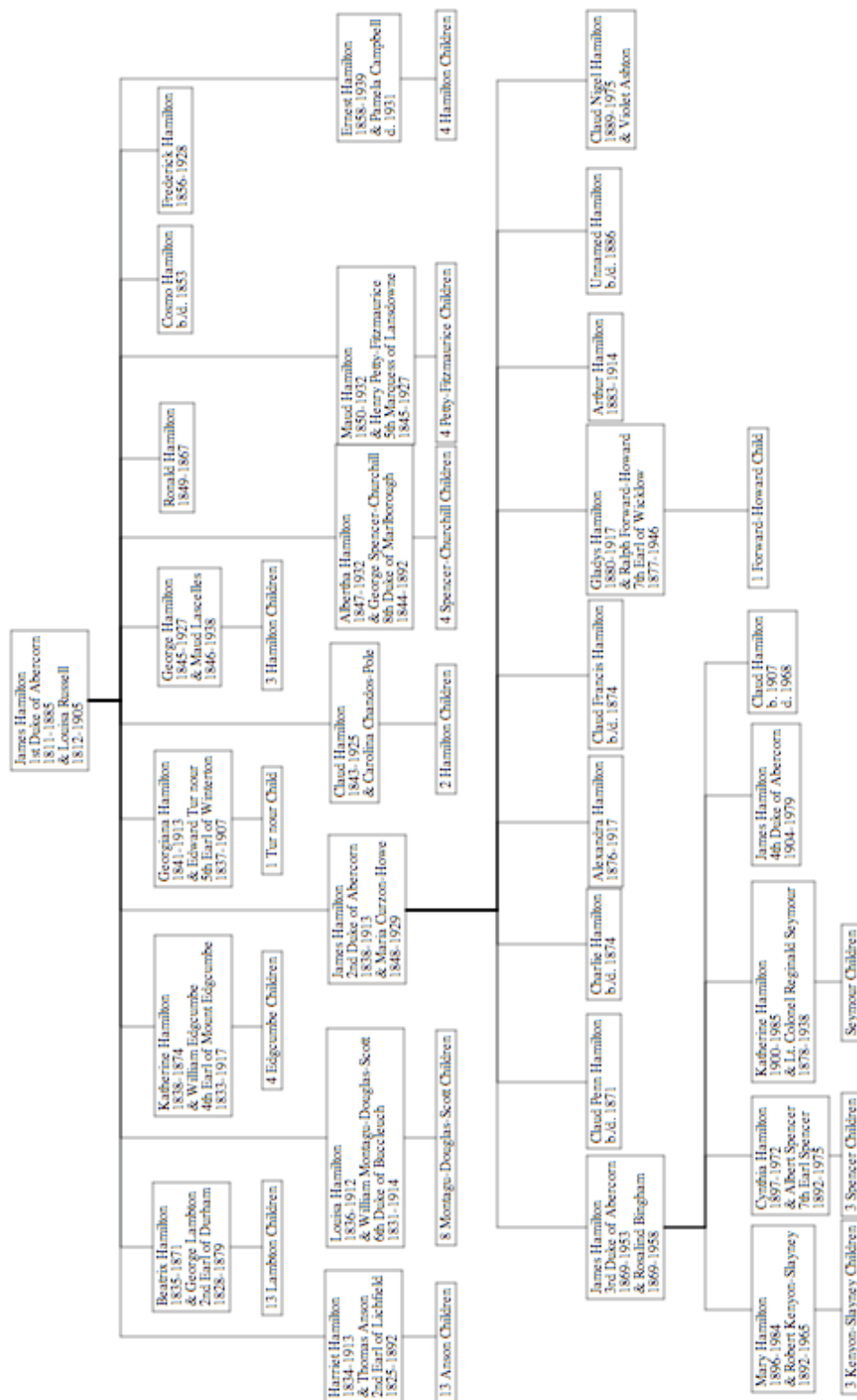
suggested that this period was one of conscious and active cultural adaptation, in which these families used social and cultural means to shore up their relevance within society in the face of challenges to their political and economic power. Rather than fading into obscurity as they were stripped of their electoral power and financial strength, these families adapted their marriage networks, social connections, entertainment patterns, and relationships with the worlds of art and architecture in order to reaffirm and retain their positions as social and cultural leaders in the first half of the twentieth century.

Appendices

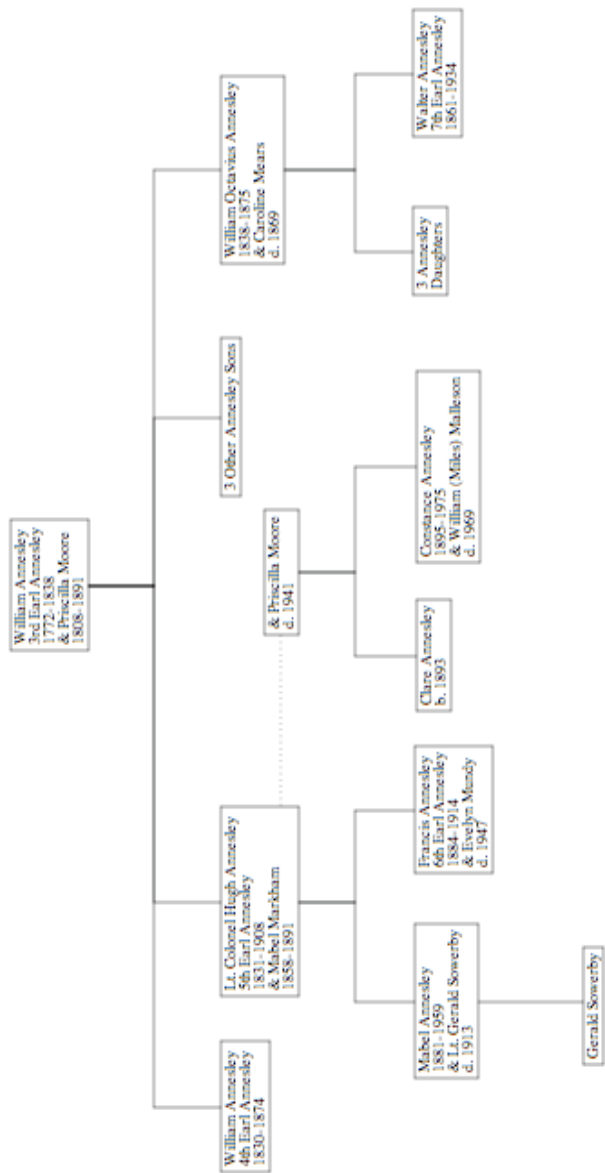
Family Trees

Abercorn	296
Annesley	297
Belmore	298
Caledon	299
Dartrey	300
Dufferin	301
Enniskillen	302
Erne	303
Kilmorey	304
Leslie	305
Londonderry	306
Rossmore	307

1: Abercorn



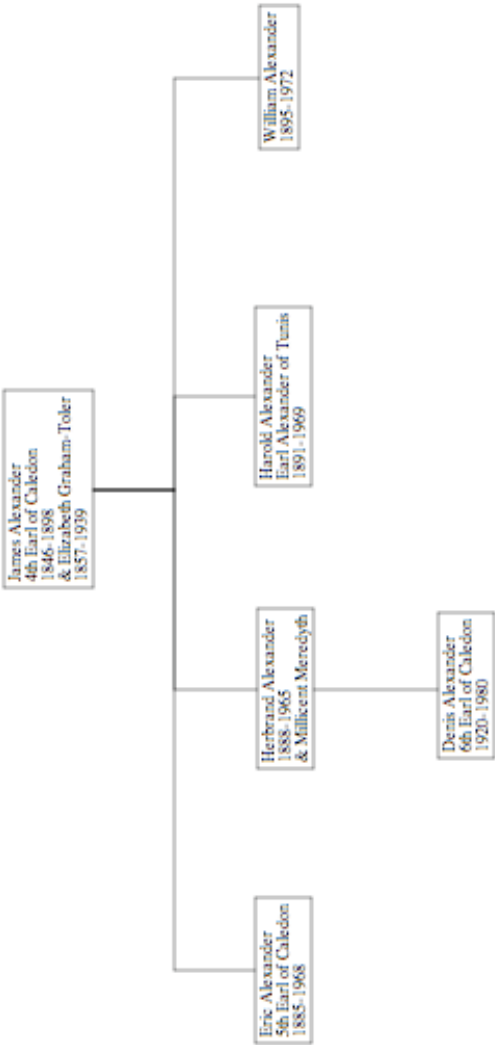
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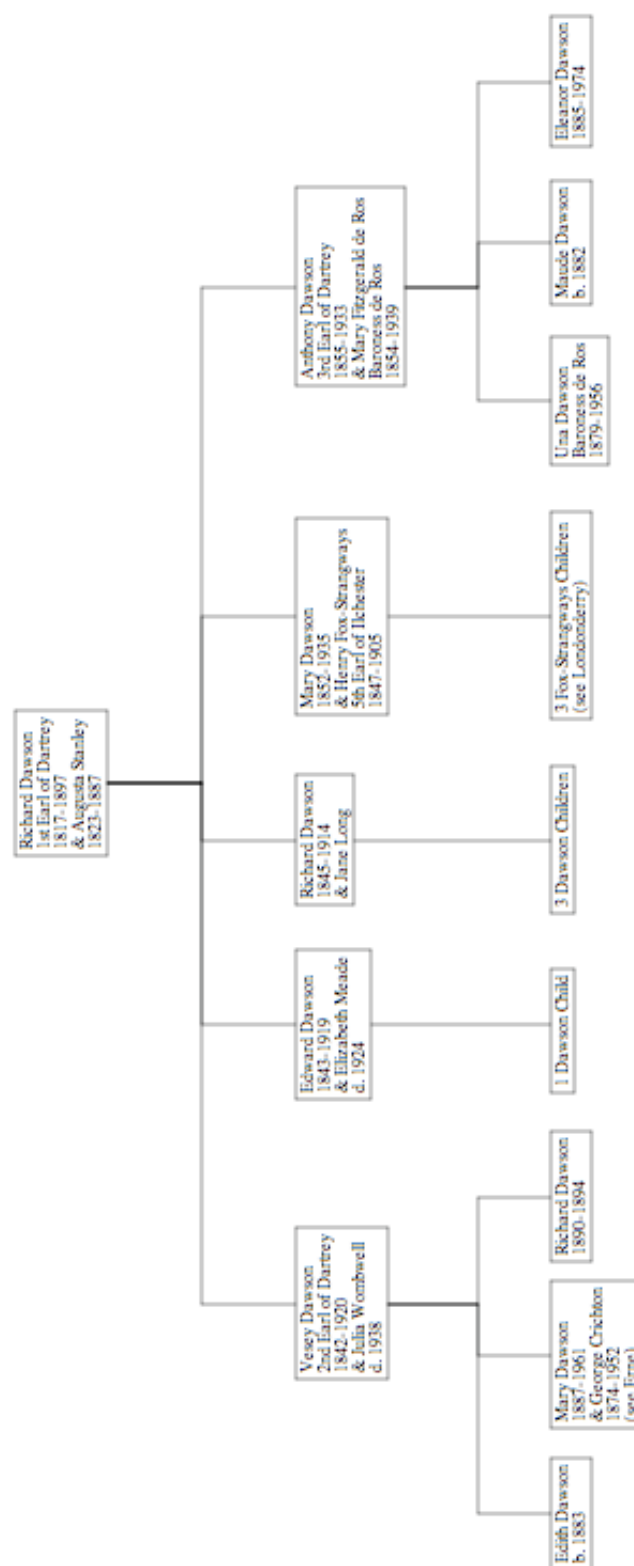
3: Belmore



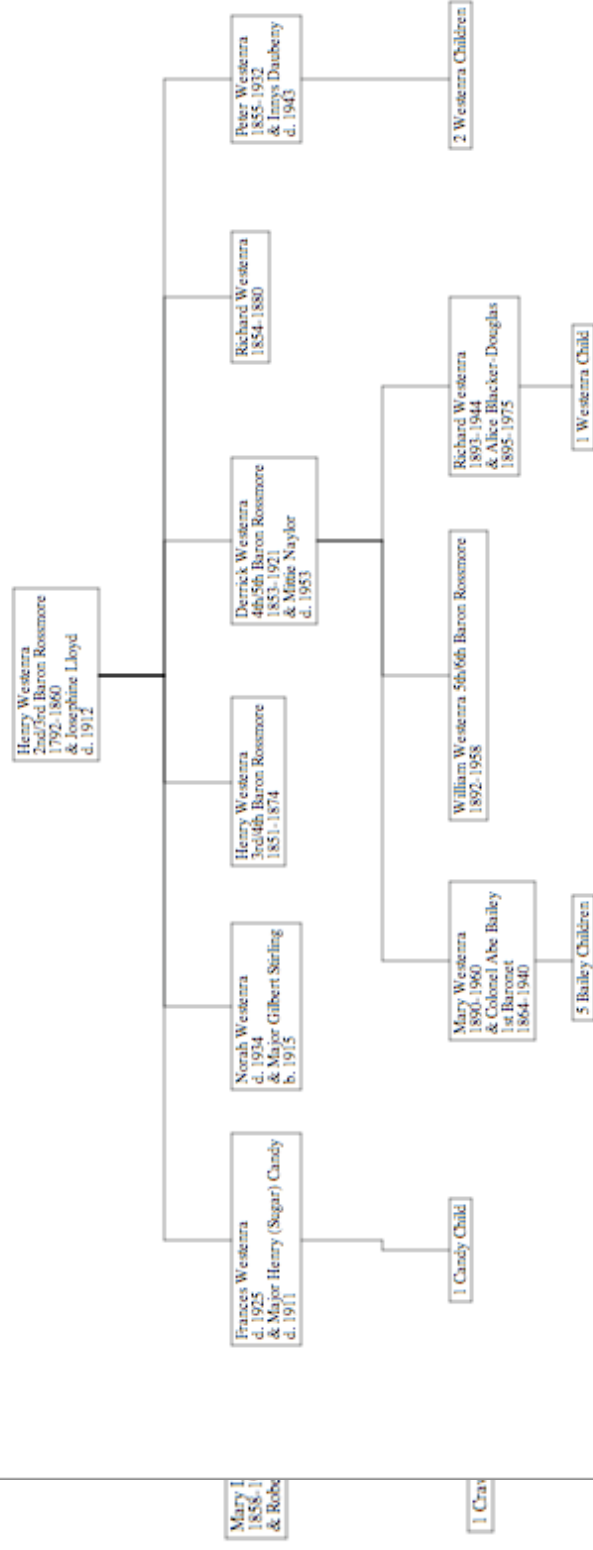
4: Caledon



5: Dartrey



12: Rossmore

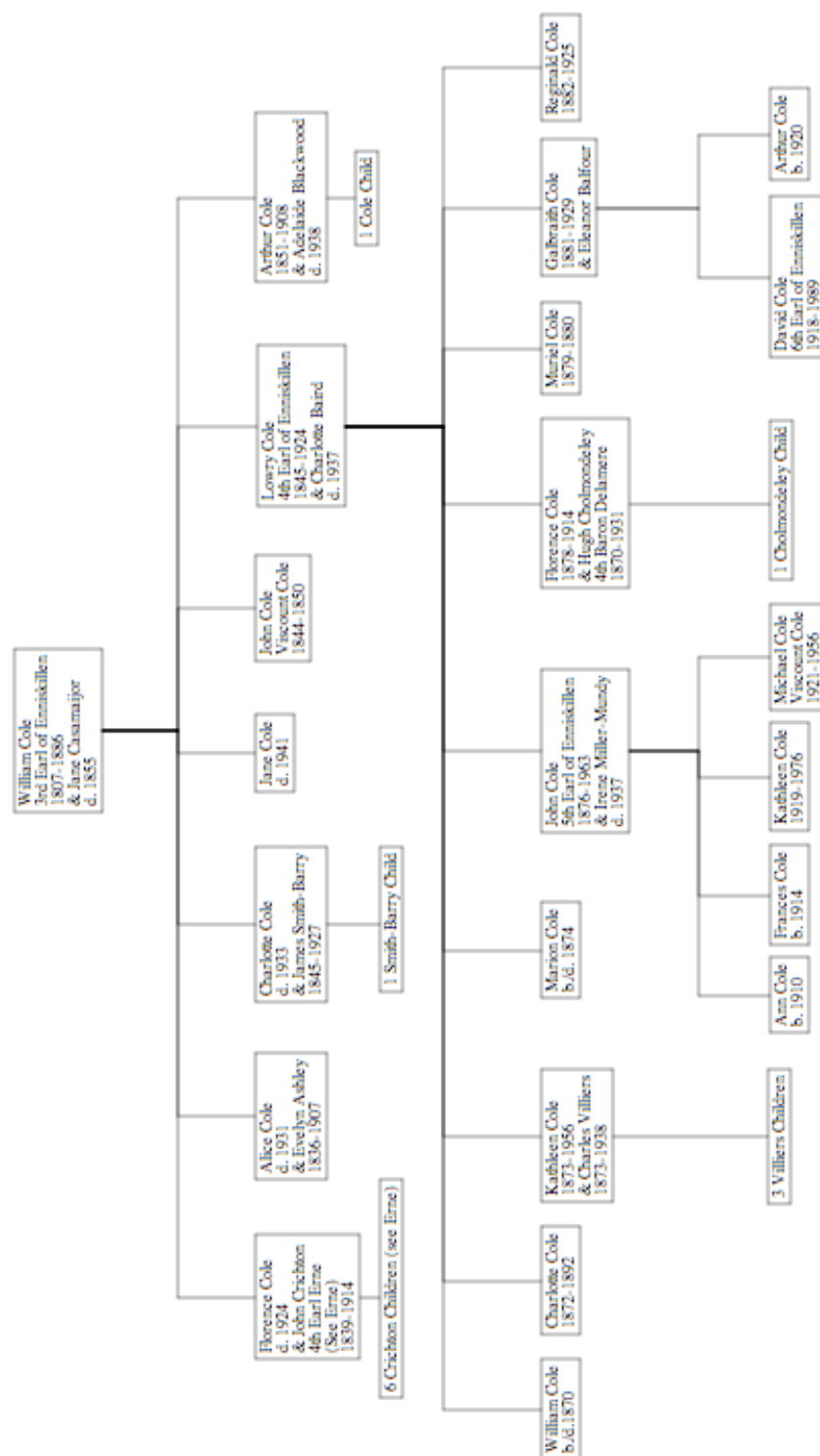


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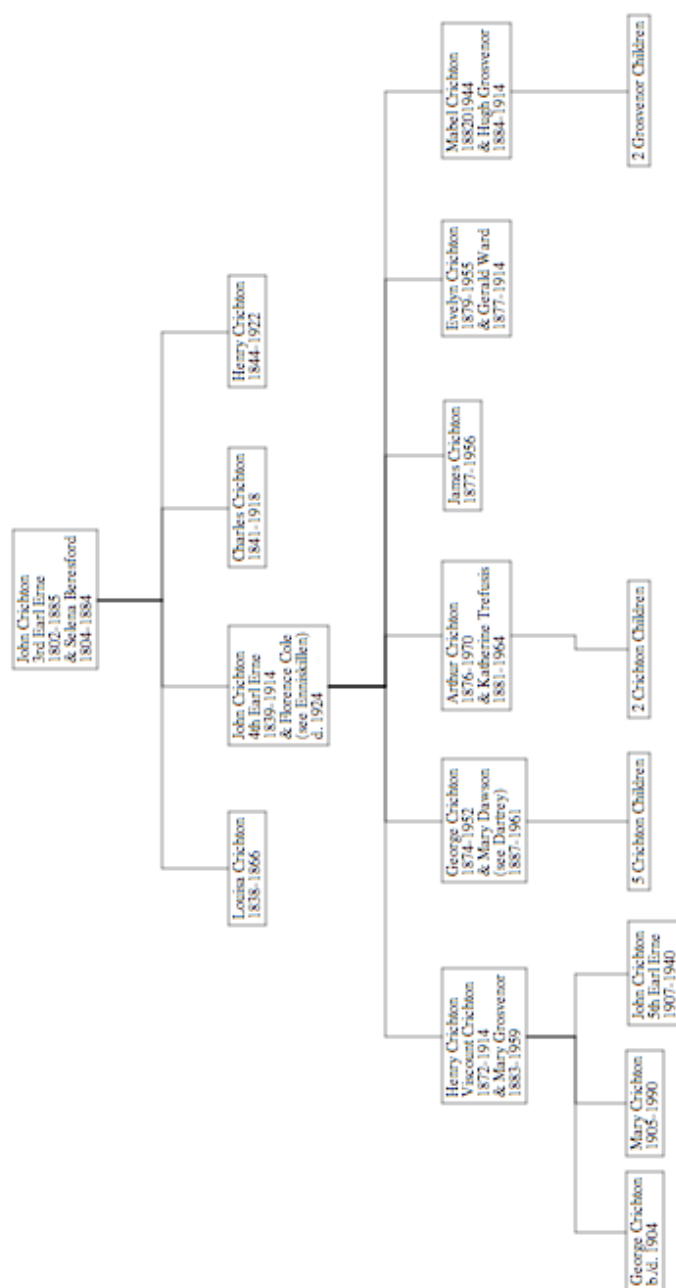
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Archibald Black
Lord Ava
1863-1900

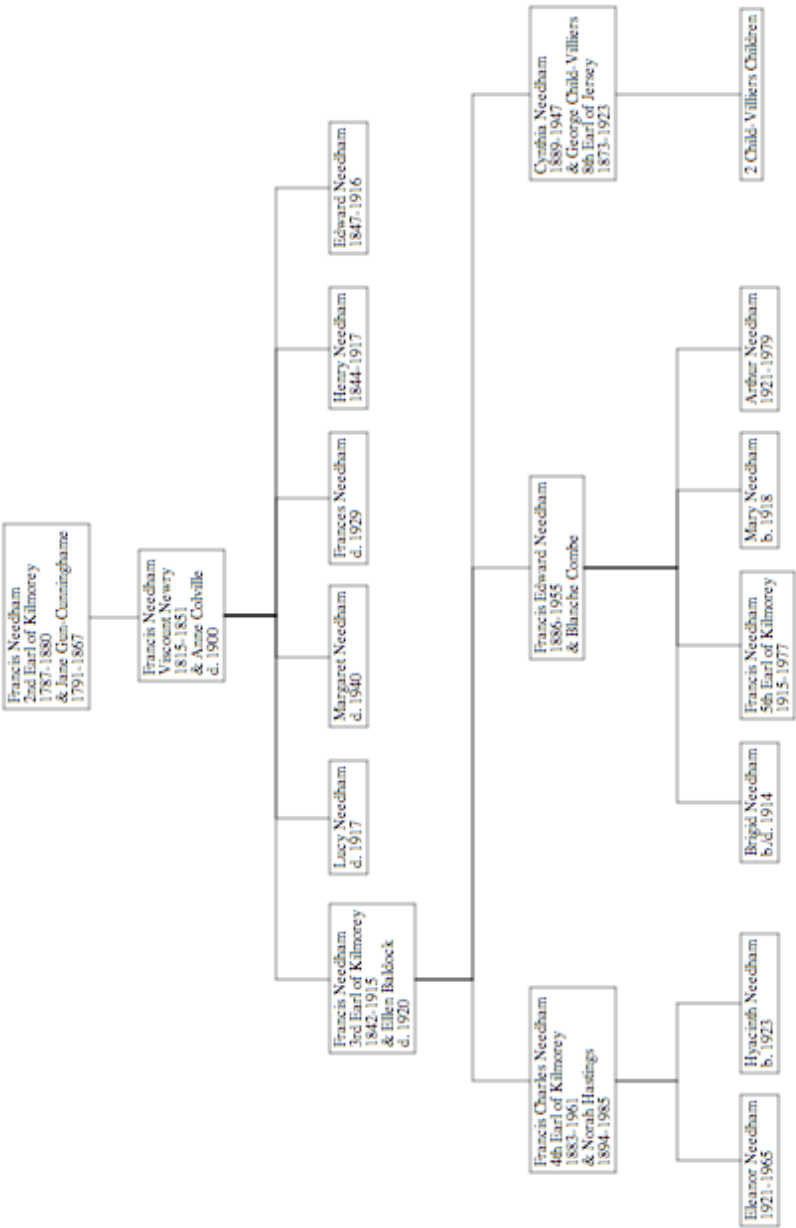
7: Enniskillen



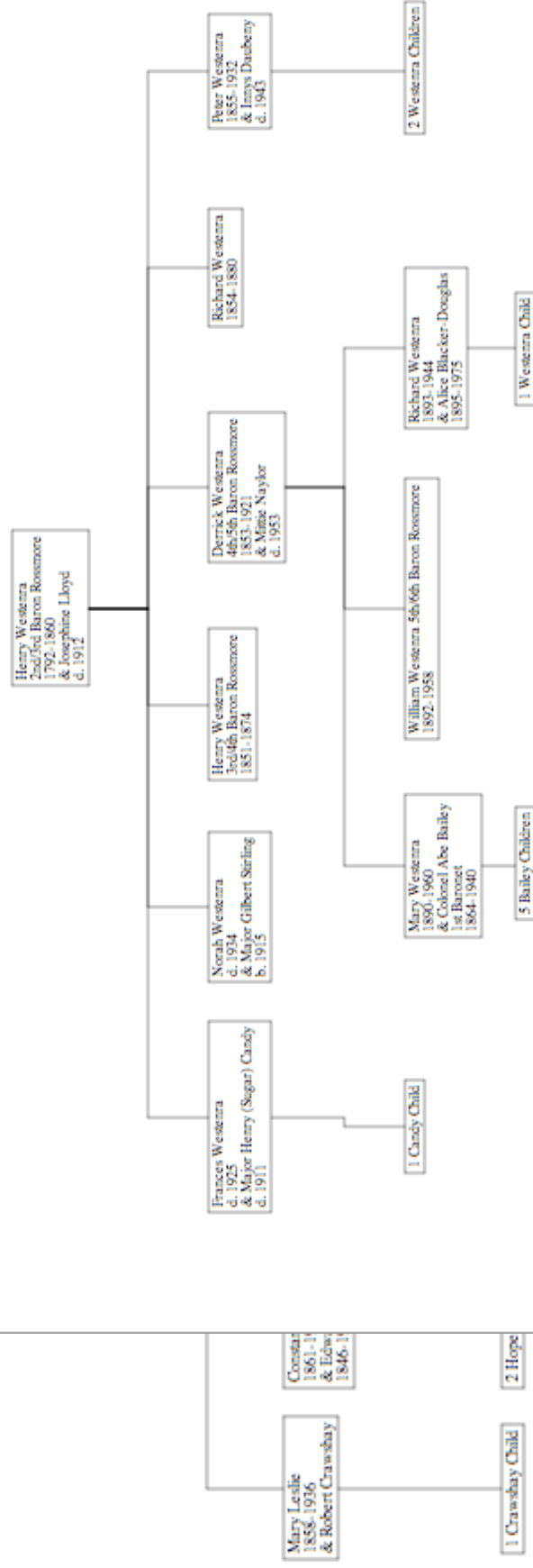
8: Erne



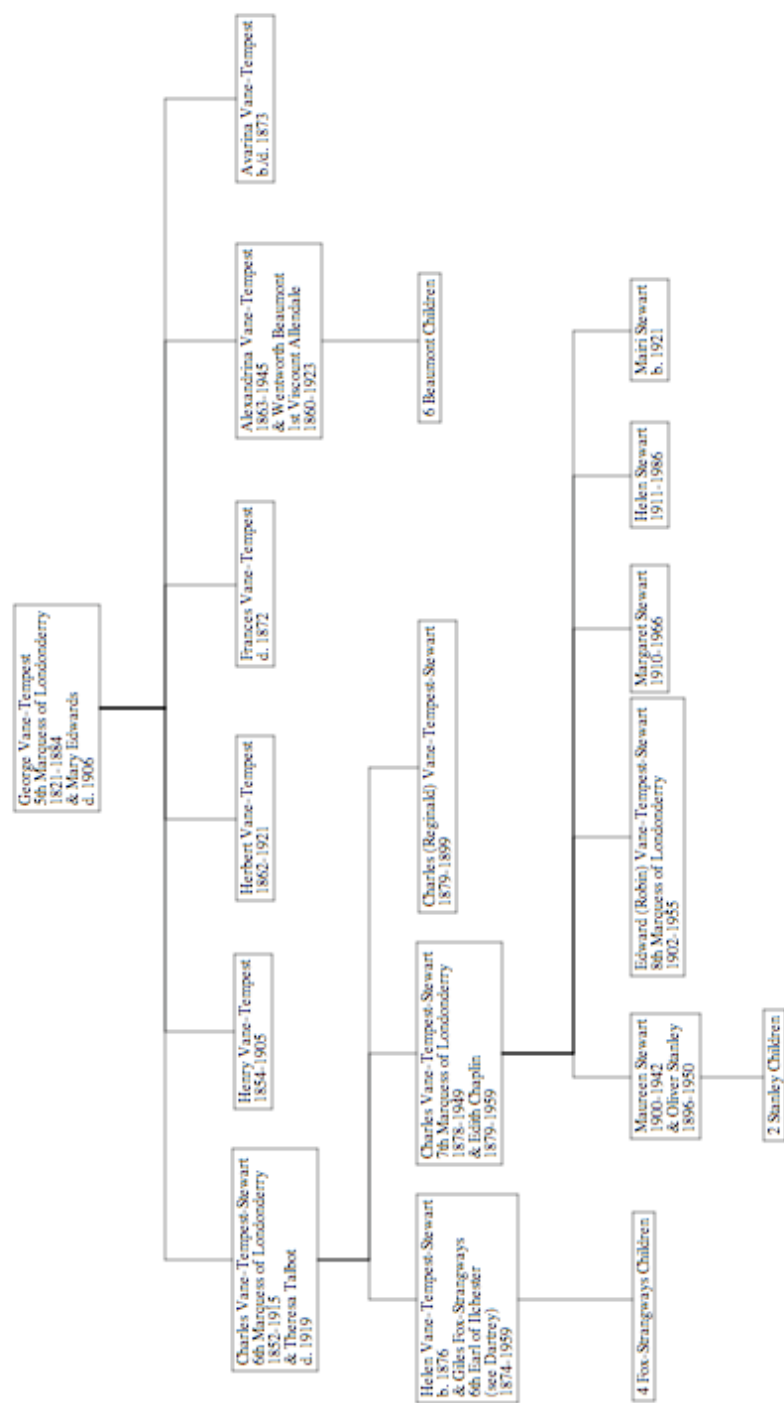
9: Kilmorey



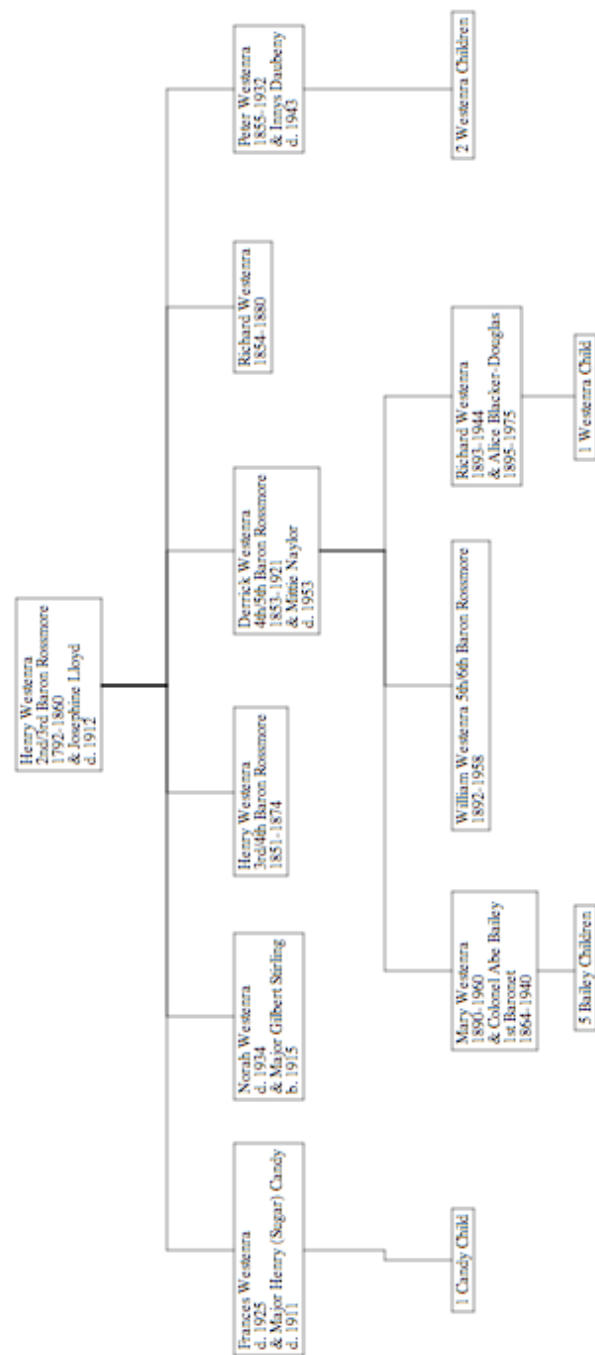
12: Rossmore



11: Londonderry



12: Rossmore



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